



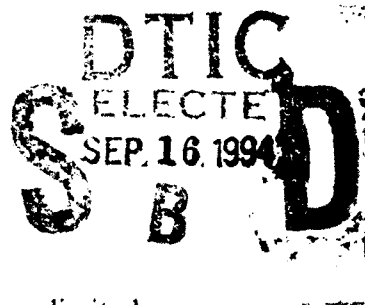
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Master's Thesis

United States Joint Operations in the Tripolitan Campaign of 1805

Major David M. King, USA

U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-6900



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In 1801, Yusef Caramanli, ruler of Tripoli, declared war on the United States. Yusef expected the United States to agree to pay tribute in exchange for protection from Tripolitan corsairs. Instead, President Thomas Jefferson sent the navy. Four years later, the war continued. When a former consul to Tunis named William Eaton proposed using Yusef's brother Hamet in a campaign against Tripoli, Jefferson agreed to let him try. Eaton sought out Hamet in the Egyptian desert and assembled a mixed army of U.S. Marines, mercenaries, and Arabs. Eaton and his army then marched 500 miles across North Africa to the Tripolitan town of Derne. With assistance from the navy, Eaton captured Derne in America's first joint and combined military operation since the Revolutionary War. Alarmed by the fall of Derne, Yusef quickly agreed to a peace settlement in which the U.S. paid Yusef \$60,000. Eaton protested that if the U.S. negotiator had not agreed to such shameful terms, Eaton could have captured Tripoli and enforced a more favorable peace. An examination of the evidence shows that Eaton's chances of success were poor and the U.S. negotiator was correct in ending the war.

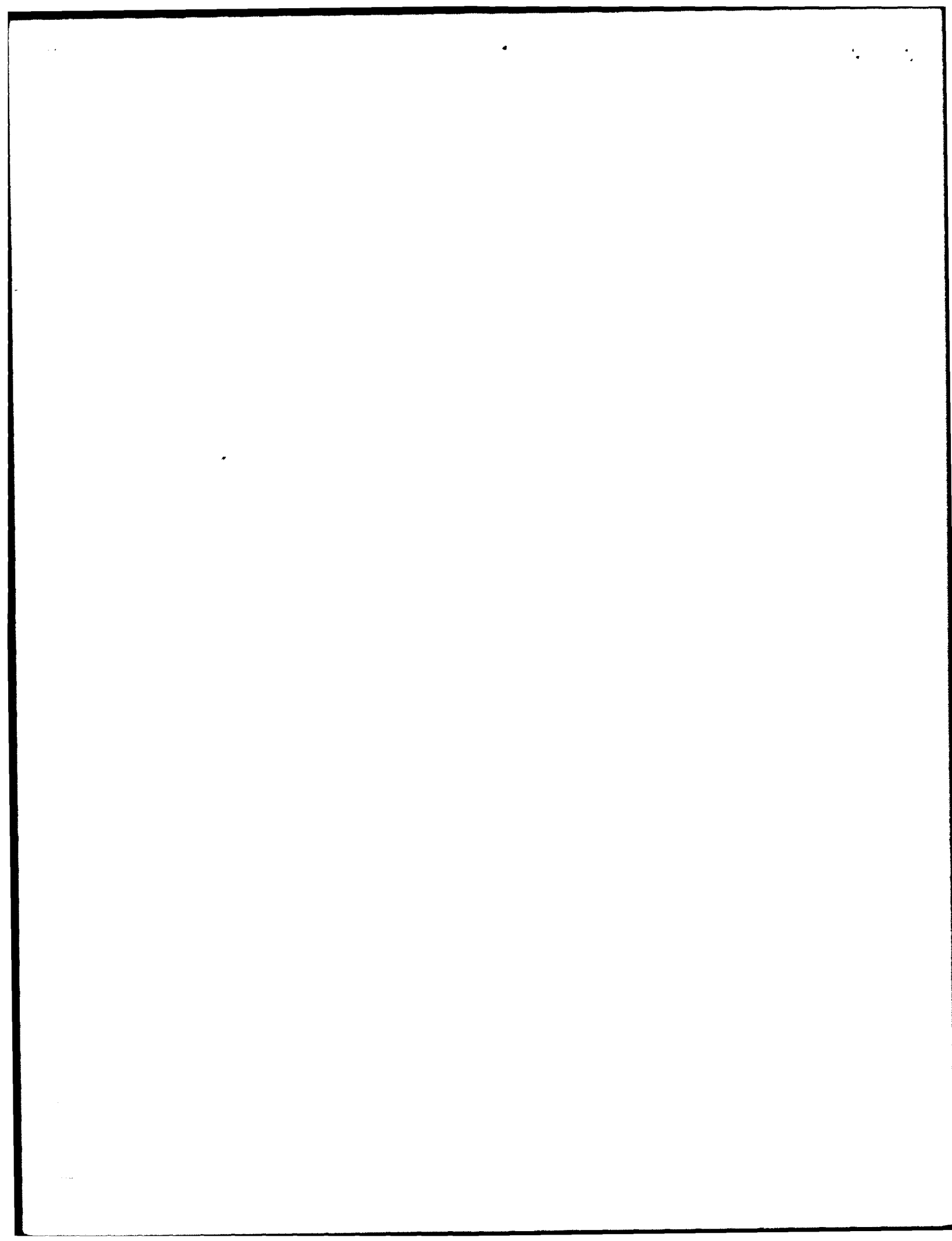
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UNITED STATES JOINT OPERATIONS DURING
THE TRIPOLITAN CAMPAIGN OF 1805

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

DAVID M. KING, MAJ, USA
B.A., University of California, Berkeley, 1981

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of Candidate: Major David M. King

Thesis Title: United States Joint Operations in the Tripolitan Campaign of 1805

Approved by:

Michael D. Pearlman, Thesis Committee Chairman
Michael D. Pearlman, Ph.D.

Arthur T. Frame, Member
Arthur T. Frame, Ph.D.

Richard V. Barbuto, Member
LTC Richard V. Barbuto, M.A.

Accepted this 3rd Day of June 1994 by:

Philip J. Brookes, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D.

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

UNITED STATES JOINT OPERATIONS IN THE TRIPOLITAN CAMPAIGN OF 1805 by MAJ David M. King, USA, 137 pages

In 1801, Yusef Caramanli, ruler of Tripoli, declared war on the United States. Yusef expected the United States to agree to pay tribute in exchange for protection from Tripolitan corsairs. Instead, President Thomas Jefferson sent the navy. Four years later, the war continued. When a former consul to Tunis named William Eaton proposed using Yusef's brother Hamet in a campaign against Tripoli, Jefferson agreed to let him try. Eaton sought out Hamet in the Egyptian desert and assembled a mixed army of U.S. Marines, mercenaries, and Arabs. Eaton and his army then marched 500 miles across North Africa to the Tripolitan town of Derne. With assistance from the navy, Eaton captured Derne in America's first joint and combined military operation since the Revolutionary War.

Alarmed by the fall of Derne, Yusef quickly agreed to a peace settlement in which the U.S. paid Yusef \$60,000. Eaton protested that if the U.S. negotiator had not agreed to such shameful terms, Eaton could have captured Tripoli and enforced a more favorable peace. An examination of the evidence shows that Eaton's chances of success were poor and that the U.S. negotiator was correct in ending the war.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Shortly after Thomas Jefferson was first inaugurated as President of the United States in 1801, he dispatched a naval squadron to the Mediterranean Sea to combat privateers sent by the Bashaw of Tripoli to prey on American shipping. This was not the first deployment of U.S. military forces to fight a foreign enemy. The U.S. Navy had fought the French during the Quasi-War of 1797-1798. Earlier still, the U.S. had fought the British during the War of Independence. In both earlier conflicts, most American naval activity occurred in the western Atlantic or in the Caribbean.

The Tripolitan War of 1801-1805 involved the first sustained and coordinated use of American military power outside the Western Hemisphere. It included America's first joint land-sea campaign since the American Revolution. Many of the characteristics of American experience with Mideastern countries ever since that time appeared during the war: cultural barriers, religious fanaticism, and hostage-taking.¹ The United States Navy learned its trade during the Tripolitan War. A decade later many of these same young officers and sailors would stun the mighty British Navy in single ship encounters during the War of 1812. In the Tripolitan War, the American Navy sometimes suffered from lethargy and cowardice, yet at other times it accomplished heroic exploits that earned the astonished admiration of European navies.²

The final campaign of the war featured an extraordinary overland march that culminated in the storming of a fortified town and the first raising of the Stars

and Stripes over an Old World fort. The land forces that stormed the Tripolitan town of Derne included a dispossessed Arab prince and his followers, a motley collection of Christian mercenaries, a squad of U.S. Marines, and an American naval agent named William Eaton. Appointed "General" by his Arab ally, Eaton commanded the land forces, and without his energetic leadership, the little army would not have reached or captured Derne. The overland march from Egypt traversed five hundred miles of barren country in which the few inhabitants were as likely to be hostile as friendly. The Arabs threatened to mutiny several times and tried to desert when mutiny failed. Water and food were scarce and the little army was nearly starving by the time it reached the frontiers of Tripolitania.³

Having reached enemy territory, the land forces would not have succeeded without the assistance of the United States Navy. The navy provided supplies and fire support for the assault on Derne. The supplies were essential for the survival of the expedition, and the naval gunfire was key to the successful storming of Derne.⁴

This study focuses on Eaton's campaign. The campaign involved the first close cooperation of American blue-water naval forces with a land campaign since the generally dismal operations of the American Revolution. It was a successful combination that brought the Tripolitan War to an end. Eaton's biographers support his assertion that the campaign could have continued all the way to Tripoli, had not the Bashaw of Tripoli chosen instead to make peace with the United States.⁵ The peace agreement prevented Eaton from advancing beyond Derne and forced him to abandon many of his Arab supporters. Forever after, Eaton was bitter about this "treason against the character of the nation" that left his ally Hamet in exile and forced many of Hamet's followers to flee into the desert.⁶

Questions to be addressed

Eaton's expedition was a remarkable adventure, with all the romance of Lawrence of Arabia. The expedition achieved the success it did largely because of Eaton's talents and determination. Determination, however, is not enough in itself to move an army across a desert. Eaton's talents by themselves could not have achieved the successful combination of land and sea forces that enabled his army to capture Derne. In this study I will try to reveal some of the other factors that led to the success of the campaign. I will also investigate whether Eaton could have continued the campaign to Tripoli, as he asserted and as subsequent historians have accepted.

Specifically, this study will attempt to answer four questions:

1. What was the United States trying to achieve by embarking on the campaign?
2. How did Eaton manage to march across the desert and capture Derne?
3. How did land and naval forces work together to achieve success in the operation?
4. Should Eaton have been allowed to press on toward Tripoli?

To answer the first question, Chapter 2 of this study presents the background of the Tripolitan War--the origins of the Barbary Pirates and why the United States went to war with Tripoli. Chapter 3 describes the course of the first three years of the Tripolitan War and examines what President Jefferson intended to achieve by authorizing Eaton's expedition.

To answer the second question, Chapter 4 describes how Eaton assembled his army, and Chapter Five describes how Eaton marched to and captured Derne.

To answer the third question, Chapter 4 discusses command and control arrangements for the United States Mediterranean Squadron and Eaton's army. Chapters 4 and 5 describe the cooperation between Eaton and the naval commander supporting him.

To answer the fourth question, Chapter 6 describes the events that followed the capture of Derne and examines what might have happened had Eaton been allowed to continue toward Tripoli. The discussion considers the risks and the potential gains of continuing the expedition.

Chapter Seven presents an epilogue to the campaign and summarizes the conclusions reached in this study.

Review of the Literature

The most important primary source for studying Eaton's land campaign is his journal. He kept a detailed record of his activities during his time as Consul in Tunis and throughout his expedition of 1804-1805. Eaton's journal, as well as his other papers, are presently in the Huntington Library in San Marino California, beyond the reach of the Combined Arms Research Library. However, the pertinent entries are contained in various other references. The U.S. *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, for example, contains many extracts from Eaton's journal, plus the correspondence of Eaton, naval officers, government officials, and other persons associated with U.S. operations in the Mediterranean. Charles Prentiss's *Life of the Late General William Eaton* consists primarily of journal extracts and letters arranged chronologically to tell the story of Eaton's life.

A number of other biographies of Eaton exist, as well as several books about the Tripolitan War in general. Most appear to draw on Eaton's records for

most of their information about the campaign of 1804-1805. As a result, most say the same things. Eaton did not address the mechanics of his operation in detail. He recorded a march from one bivouac to the next, for example, but did not describe how he and Hamet Caramanli organized the marching forces.⁷

Glenn Tucker, in *Dawn like Thunder*, takes a somewhat wider approach to the Tripolitan War, including the campaign of 1804-1805. He appears to do a good job of reasoning his way past the gaps in factual information. He does not fully develop the mechanics of land-sea operations, but he does better than most other writers. However, Tucker was a newspaperman by trade, and his account of the Tripolitan War does not pass up a good story just because the facts do not support it.

A. B. C. Whipple, in *To the Shores of Tripoli*, draws some parallels between the Tripolitan War and the Persian Gulf War. The parallels are superficial and seem mostly intended to help sell the book as popular history. Whipple does not treat Eaton's expedition with much scholarly depth.

In *Tripoli and the United States at War*, Michael L. S. Kitzen generally presents information drawn from the *Naval Documents*. His introductory chapter presents a good short history of the Barbary Pirates.

Francis Rennell Rodd, in *General Wm. Eaton, The Failure of an Idea*, presents a well-crafted biography of Eaton, drawn mostly from Eaton's journals. His work includes excellent maps depicting North Africa in Eaton's time and showing Eaton's route from Alexandria to Derne. Rodd gives considerable attention to the benefits that might have accrued to the United States had Eaton succeeded in marching to Tripoli and returning Hamet to power. Rodd condemns Tobias Lear and Thomas Jefferson for negotiating peace with Yusef and abandoning Hamet.⁸

Rodd is typical of historians of Eaton's expedition in condemning Lear and Barron for concluding an early peace and abandoning Hamet. Eaton in his writings makes a passionate argument that the peace treaty with Yusef was "treason against the character of the nation."⁹ Historians, perhaps drawn into the romance of Eaton's adventure, tend to agree with Eaton that he could have marched all the way to Tripoli and enforced a far more favorable peace.

Rodd in his criticism of Jefferson may not have adequately considered how low a priority the Mediterranean was. The historians who wrote about Jefferson's foreign policy clearly understood that the Tripolitan War was merely an annoying sideshow to Jefferson. Books such as *Foreign Policies of the Founding Fathers* by Paul A. Varg are helpful in putting the Tripolitan War into a political context. Thomas Jefferson's papers, the *American State Papers*, and other sources of information about Jefferson's presidency are abundant, and although they contain relatively few references to the Tripolitan War, the lack of references is instructive. The United States was far more worried about the French and the British than the Barbary States. Most of our trade was with Britain or in the Caribbean, not in the Mediterranean.¹⁰ Both France and England threatened to seize American ships that traded with the wrong side in their war, and both had navies that represented a greater threat than did the Barbary States.

In her biography of Isaac Hull, *The Captain from Connecticut*, Linda Maloney asserts that Eaton's expedition was not necessary. According to Maloney, "Everyone in the Mediterranean expected that the mere appearance of Barron's full force off Tripoli in the spring [of 1805] would force the pasha to make peace."¹¹ The available evidence indicates she is wrong. Captain William Bainbridge, for example, suggested in November 1804 that the war might drag on until the following fall, with little prospect for American success.¹²

The Nigerian author, Kola Folayan, has taken an entirely different view of the Tripolitan War from that of American and British historians.¹³ He attempts to show that the Americans were responsible for the Tripolitan War because they failed to understand the relationships among the different Barbary Regencies. He then describes how the Tripolitans defeated American aggression. In particular, he emphasizes the support Tripoli received from the other Barbary powers and the successes the Tripolitan navy achieved against the American fleet.

Folayan does not subscribe to the romantic interpretation of Eaton's expedition promulgated by Western popular historians. By emphasizing Tripolitan successes, he highlights aspects of the conflict other historians have largely ignored. Folayan makes several erroneous and misleading statements, but despite its flaws, his work is useful as a counterbalance to works that look at the war mainly from the American perspective.

British historian Seton Deardon's *A Nest of Corsairs: The Fighting Karamanlis of Tripoli* is a good, well balanced history of Tripoli during the Caramanli dynasty. The chapter that covers Eaton's expedition is too brief to add much to what other writers offer.¹⁴

Many books describe the workings of the British Navy during the Age of Nelson, but few give details about the puny and relatively insignificant American navy. The United States Navy may have modeled itself on the British to a large degree, so books such as Dudley Pope's *Life in Nelson's Navy* are useful in understanding shipboard life. The United States Navy, however, was quite different in many ways from the Royal Navy, and not just in size. Theodore Roosevelt's *Naval War of 1812* provides many details on the mechanics of U.S. naval operations for the War of 1812; these men and ships had fought in the Tripolitan War.

A number of magazine articles, many published in *The Leatherneck* or *The Marine Corps Gazette*, emphasize the role of the U.S. Marine Corps in Eaton's expedition. The words of the Marine Corps Hymn, "to the shores of Tripoli," refer to Lieutenant O'Bannon and his little squad.¹⁵ The magazine articles appear to contain little new information.

CHAPTER 2

ORIGINS OF CONFLICT

The Barbary Pirates

The Barbary States of North Africa consisted of present day Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. Beginning in the 12th Century, the Barbary States practiced piracy not merely to annoy their enemies but as their main source of income. The Muslims of North Africa found piracy far more lucrative than farming. Piracy yielded slaves, treasure, and ransom. Farming offered little more than bare subsistence. Piracy also provided Muslims an opportunity to strike at the Christians of Europe. Islam endorsed piracy directed against Christians, especially as the wealth and power of western Europe grew. When the Moors were forced out of Spain, piracy became one of the few ways they could continue to oppose Christianity.¹

Shortly after the death of Mohammed in 632, the religion he founded spread across North Africa. By the close of the 7th Century, the Islamic Omayyad Dynasty had conquered Carthage; within the next twenty years the rest of North Africa fell and the Muslims had conquered Spain. The Muslims advanced across the Pyrenees, but were turned back when the Frankish King, Charles Martel, defeated them at Tours in 732 AD. Thereafter, the Christians slowly pushed the Muslims back toward North Africa.² Warfare between Christians and Muslims continued through the next eleven centuries. For a while, the Islamic world grew wealthy and powerful through conquest and trade while Europe remained backward and poor. Eventually, the Europeans acquired new technologies and wealth, and the Muslims fell into relative decline.

The Mediterranean served as the stage for conflict. Around its shores, Christians and Muslims battled for the glory of God and what booty they could pick up. In the Eastern Mediterranean, the Christians launched the Crusades to wrest the Holy Land from the Muslims. Initially, the Crusaders succeeded in capturing Jerusalem. The Muslims, though disunited, did not give up, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem was under constant pressure. To protect Christian pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land, a group of knights formed a military religious order, the Knights of the Temple, or Knights Templars. Soon after, a second order formed, the Knights of St. John, or Knights Hospitaliers. The military-religious orders, together with secular knights and men-at-arms, struggled for two hundred years to preserve the Christian toehold in the Holy Land. When the resurgent Muslims finally drove the Christians out, the Knights Templars withdrew to Europe. Too wealthy for their own good and lacking any real purpose, the Templars soon disappeared.³

The Knights of St. John, in contrast, withdrew only to Cyprus, where they found a new purpose: protecting pilgrims at sea. With the Christians out of the Holy Land, the Mediterranean became the next battleground. Piracy--both Muslim against Christian and Christian against Muslim--was a fact of life for sailors on the Mediterranean for the next seven centuries. In 1310, the Hospitaliers moved their base from Cyprus to Rhodes, where they built a great fortress from which they launched ships to patrol the eastern Mediterranean.⁴

When the Ottoman Empire became the dominant force in Anatolia, and the Levant, it also took over the struggle for control of the eastern Mediterranean. In 1522, Suleyman the Magnificent sent a great army in 160 ships to subdue the fortress of Rhodes. After a six month siege, the Knights of St. John surrendered. Suleyman allowed the knights safe passage to the west. They settled on Malta and built another great fortress there.⁵

Meanwhile in Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella had completed the defeat of the Moorish power when they captured Grenada in 1492. Thousands of Moors retreated across the straits of Gibraltar and settled in North Africa. Finding the arid land unsuitable for farming, many of the Moors turned to piracy, both as a means of making a living and as a way to continue the fight against the Christians who had driven them from their homes.⁶

The most famous pirate of the age was Khair ed-Din, nicknamed Barbarossa. Born in Greece, he served as an admiral in the Turkish fleet. From 1516 to 1546 he ranged the Mediterranean, preying on ships, raiding coastal towns, and making himself fabulously wealthy. He also helped the Turks capture all of North Africa except Morocco by 1554. He so frightened the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, that Charles sent a huge fleet against him. Charles captured Tunis, but Barbarossa obtained additional ships from his friend Suleyman and returned to drive the Christians back out of North Africa.⁷

The Christians still held an outpost off North Africa: Malta. From their fortress there, the Knights of St. John raided Muslim shipping and captured enough slaves to distress the Turks and to make a tidy profit for themselves. Ferdinand of Spain took Tripoli from the Turks in 1510 and gave it to the Knights of St. John. The Knights held it until 1553, when the Turkish corsairs Dragut and Sinan captured it and turned it over to Suleyman.⁸ Suleyman sent a fleet to subdue Malta in 1565, but the Knights resisted a four month siege, and once Spanish reinforcements arrived, the Christians slaughtered the remaining Turkish forces.⁹ Six years later, a "Holy League" of Spanish, Italian, and Austrian ships defeated the Turkish fleet at Lepanto, destroying Turkish seapower.¹⁰

Piracy, however, did not end with the demise of the Turkish fleet. The Turks still ruled North Africa, and the Turkish North African provinces, known as the Barbary Regencies or (later) the Barbary States, remained a stronghold for pirates.

The Ottoman Sultan ruled North Africa through governors appointed by *firman*, or royal decree. The governors, or Pashas, had full autocratic powers, so long as they sent regular tributes to the Sultan and obeyed his commands in foreign affairs. Appointments were normally for a term of three years, after which the Sultan could renew the *firman* or recall and replace the Pasha. The Sultan could choose not to renew the *firman* of a Pasha who appeared to be accruing too much independence. The Pasha had near absolute power within his province, but the temporary nature of his appointment and his dependence on Turkish soldiers to enforce his authority kept him loyal to the Sultan.¹¹

The Pashas maintained fleets and sponsored privateers for the purpose of raiding Christian shipping. Being state-sponsored, the privateers were not legally pirates; if captured they were generally treated as prisoners of war rather than as criminals. They shared their booty with the Pasha who sponsored them.

Piracy was profitable, and the Pashas stood to gain great wealth as long as they held their *firmans*. The pirates, too, could become wealthy, with far less risk and inconvenience than they would face, for example, on the Spanish Main. Europeans who sought wealth and adventure could find it in North Africa.

To Algiers, in particular, the most desperate renegades of Europe flocked. Some were slaves who accepted Islam; others were willing immigrants who converted to Islam so they could reap the rewards of piracy. In 1637, Father Pierre of the Mathurin Order (a religious order founded to succor Christians enslaved by Islam) reported that Algiers alone held 25,000 enslaved Christians--and another 8,000 European renegades turned pirate.¹²

The Europeans taught the native Muslims new skills in seamanship and shipbuilding, enabling the North African pirates to sail into the Atlantic. The pirates ranged as far north as the English Channel and Ireland.¹³

As Turkish power waned, the governors of the Barbary Regencies gained increasing autonomy, as well as firmer control of the pirates operating from their shores. As a result, they began to exploit a new means of obtaining wealth: They would promise to refrain from plundering the ships of Christian powers that paid tributes. England made a treaty with Tunis in 1662, in which England agreed to pay the reigning Bey a tribute. In return, the Bey ordered Tunisian corsairs to refrain from attacking English ships. England soon concluded similar treaties with the other Barbary States. Other European states with sufficient cash did likewise. From time to time, the Barbary powers would arbitrarily abrogate the treaties as a means of exacting more tribute, but in general the arrangement suited the more powerful European countries. Less powerful and less wealthy countries had no choice but to try to arrange the least onerous terms they could.¹⁴ The Europeans established Consuls in the capitals of the Barbary powers to negotiate treaties and to settle disputes that frequently arose over tribute payments and seized shipping.

Occasionally, a European power would attempt to subdue the Barbary States by force. France, for example, bombarded Algiers in 1688 and Tripoli in 1729. In neither case did the French achieve their objectives. The Algerians retaliated by blowing French hostages from the mouths of cannons; the Tripolitans endured the bombardment and waited for the Saharan winds to drive the French back to sea.¹⁵

Through the Eighteenth Century, the military power of the pirates declined steadily. By 1780, the total naval force of Algiers, the most powerful of the Barbary States, was said to be no match for two good frigates.¹⁶ Although the French experiences of 1688 and 1729 suggested that subduing the pirates would not be as easy

as it appeared, certainly the pirates were nowhere near as formidable as they once had been.

Some observers suggested that powerful countries such as England and France could have sent fleets to subdue the pirates, rather than paying bribes to appease them. The observers--including Benjamin Franklin--suspected that the powerful countries preferred to pay bribes, leaving the pirates to prey on weaker rivals, such as the Italians, Danes, Portuguese, and Dutch. A generation earlier, King Louis XIV allegedly had declared, "If there had not been an Algiers, I would have had to make one."¹⁷ In England, Lord Sheffield wrote of the benefits of North African piracy in a 1783 pamphlet attacking William Pitt's proposals for free trade with the United States. French attempts to maintain an armed peace in the Mediterranean, he wrote, "are as hurtful to the great maritime powers as the Barbary States are useful. The Americans cannot protect themselves from the latter; they cannot pretend to a navy."¹⁸

The United States

Independence from Great Britain meant U.S. ships were no longer protected by the tributes Britain paid. The pirates soon began to prey on U.S. ships, causing great misery and loss of property. In 1785, Algeria seized the American vessels *Dauphin* and *Maria*, and Morocco seized the *Betsey*. Thomas Jefferson, who was U.S. minister to France, directed the negotiators who obtained the release of the crews. The American agent in Morocco ransomed the *Betsey* and her crew for 5,000 pounds sterling. That bargain proved to be cheap. The Dey of Algiers demanded \$59,496 for the crews of the *Maria* and the *Dauphin*. Jefferson's agent could not pay, and the prisoners remained in captivity.¹⁹ Jefferson turned to the Mathurin Order for help, but the price did not drop. The prisoners were still in captivity when the French Revolution took away the sources of revenue for the Mathurin Order.²⁰

Jefferson, as minister to France and later as Washington's Secretary of State, was reluctant to pay a high ransom, lest the United States establish a precedent that its meager budget could not support. The United States was determined not to renege on its debts from the War of Independence, but the Congress's feeble powers of taxation under the Articles of Confederation provided little money to pay off old debts; new demands from the Barbary Pirates were beyond the ability of the United States to pay.²¹

After the United States adopted the Constitution, the financial condition of the federal government began to improve. Alexander Hamilton's schemes for financing the debt succeeded in putting the federal government's finances somewhat in order.²² Even so, Jefferson opposed paying tribute as a matter of national honor. He favored sending a naval force to beat the pirates into making a favorable treaty or seizing Algerian sailors to exchange for the captive Americans.²³

During the early Constitutional period, the federal government had two major expenses--the national debt and defense. The United States was unwilling to default on the national debt, so the only available savings were to cut defenses. The Federalists, led by Hamilton, urged the country to develop a navy and a professional army, primarily as a deterrent against European powers. Hamilton knew from experience that the state militias were not an effective fighting force. The Federalists also recognized that Britain and France would not take American shipping rights seriously as long as the United States lacked a Navy to defend those rights.²⁴

The American people resented the modest taxes imposed during the Washington and Adams Administrations. In particular, the agricultural constituency of the Republicans did not favor paying taxes to defend the shipping interests of the northeastern mercantile classes. These taxes were high enough to provoke the Whiskey Rebellion, but too low to pay for the kind of military Hamilton wanted. As a

nationalist, Jefferson found himself wanting to use force against the pirates, but as a Republican, he did not want to construct a navy.²⁵

In 1791, Congress, using money from the whiskey tax, appropriated money to pay for a treaty with Algiers. John Paul Jones sailed for Europe to negotiate the treaty, but he died en route. In 1793, Algiers seized several more American vessels.²⁶

The continued captivity of the Americans in Algiers, and now the capture of additional sailors, provoked a clamor for action in Congress. However, the Barbary Pirates were by no means America's gravest foreign policy concern. England and France were at war, and both threatened to embroil the United States.

When the French Revolution began, the Republicans had hailed the development; Thomas Jefferson even assisted the revolutionaries in drafting the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Hamilton's Federalists feared the chaos the revolution might unleash, as well as the catastrophic results should France draw the United States into its conflict with Britain and the rest of Europe. France attempted to invoke the mutual defense treaty the *Ancien Regime* had made with the United States during the War of Independence, but the United States resisted. Britain also exerted pressure on the United States. War with one or the other power seemed likely.²⁷

Under the threat of war with Britain, and in view of the Algerian situation, in 1794 Congress finally appropriated funds to construct a small navy of six frigates.²⁸

War came first with neither Britain nor the pirates, but with France. The small U.S. Navy was launched just in time. The Quasi-War with France lasted from 1796 to 1799 and consisted of several naval engagements in which the new American navy earned combat experience at the expense of the more numerous but inept French navy. Congress approved construction of several additional ships in 1798, but when the Quasi-War ended, Congress stopped construction to save money.²⁹

By that time, the United States had negotiated payment agreements with the Barbary States that exempted American ships from attack. The United States, following European custom, established consuls in Tangier, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. In 1794, the American Consul in Algiers secured an agreement to release of crews of the *Maria* and the *Dauphin* and other American captives. In exchange, the United States agreed to pay \$642,500 in cash, plus an annual tribute of \$21,600 in naval stores.³⁰ The United States fell immediately into arrears on the debt. The captives--those still alive--were only released in 1796 after the United States finally paid the agreed tribute, plus a bribe of jewelry and a promise of a 36-gun frigate. The total tribute to the Dey amounted to nearly \$1 million at a time when the entire federal budget was only \$5.7 million.³¹

By the end of the year, the United States had secured agreements with all of the Barbary States. However, the United States found it difficult to meet promised payments, and soon faced rising demands from the upstart Bashaw of Tripoli.

Tripoli

The ruler of Tripoli in 1796 was the energetic Yusef Caramanli, who the year before had overthrown his older brother Hamet as Bashaw.³² The Caramanli family had ruled Tripoli since Yusef's great grandfather took power in 1711. The great grandfather, Ahmad (or Hamet), became Bashaw based on a *firman* from the Ottoman Sultan, but once in power, he paid little heed to Turkish authority. Instead, Ahmad sought to establish Tripoli as an autonomous state with a hereditary ruler. He also sought to raise Tripoli to a position of relative prosperity and power.³³

Under Ahmad's weak successors, however, Tripoli again declined in power. During the reign of Ahmad's grandson Ali, Tripoli fell into near chaos as Ali's sons struggled for power. The youngest son was Yusef, who murdered his oldest

brother and intimidated his second brother and his weak father. Their squabbling gave the Ottoman Sultan an opportunity to reestablish Turkish sovereignty over the country. In 1793, the Sultan sent a force that rather easily captured Tripoli in 1793.³⁴

The arrival of the Turks allowed the Caramanlis to unite their efforts against a common enemy, and as the strongest member of the family, Yusef led the fight against the Turks. Aided by the Bey of Tunis, the Caramanlis recaptured Tripoli in 1795. Yusef's older brother Hamet became Bashaw. Hamet, however, proved a weak and unpopular ruler, and after only five months, Yusef overthrew him and became the new Bashaw.³⁵

Yusef immediately sought to establish Tripoli as a power in North Africa. Asserting rights over Mediterranean shipping was one aspect of power. Since the United States (among other nations) had no treaty with Tripoli, Yusef considered American ships to be fair targets, and in 1796 his corsairs seized two American ships, the *Sophia* and the *Betsy*. The *Sophia* was carrying tribute to the Dey of Algiers, so the Tripolitans released it. The Tripolitans turned the *Betsy* into the flagship of their navy and renamed it the *Meshouda*.³⁶

The Americans sought the assistance of the Dey of Algiers to negotiate for the release of *Betsy's* crew. The Dey wrote to Yusef and arranged for negotiations between Tripoli and the U.S. Consul to Algiers, Richard O'Brien. O'Brien offered \$40,000 for the release of *Betsy's* crew, but Yusef turned down the offer because it was less than the rulers of Algiers and Tunis received. Eventually Yusef agreed to accept \$52,000 and a supply of naval stores in exchange for *Betsy's* crew. The agreement included an American pledge to send a consul to Tripoli. The Dey of Algiers agreed to mediate any future disputes.³⁷

Yusef insisted on having a consul of his own. He felt annoyed by the appearance that the Americans thought him somehow subordinate to the Dey of

Algiers. O'Brien in Algiers was the only American Consul in North Africa before 1796. The provision for the Dey of Algiers to mediate disputes may have compounded Yusef's feeling of belittlement. When the Americans fell in arrears on payments to Tripoli and after two years had not yet provided a consul, O'Brien attempted to refer Yusef's complaints to the Dey.

The American consul, James Cathcart, finally arrived in Tripoli in 1799. Cathcart appeased Yusef by paying him \$18,000 and promising additional consular presents. He also forwarded a letter to the President of the United States in which Yusef declared America had met all treaty obligations. Peace had been consummated, wrote Yusef. Yusef insisted only that America treat Tripoli as equal to the other Barbary States.³⁸ A year later, Yusef had received no reply from the President. Cathcart explained that the delay was due to a harsh winter in America. Yusef observed that the weather had not prevented the Dey of Algiers from receiving a shipment of presents a few weeks earlier. Yusef concluded America was treating Tripoli as a lesser power.³⁹

In September 1800, one of Yusef's admirals captured the American brig *Catherine*. Yusef ordered the brig to be released, but then demanded further tribute from the United States. Yusef demanded a response from the United States within six months or he would declare war. Cathcart tried to explain that since it was winter, six months was not enough time to send a message across the Atlantic and to receive a reply.⁴⁰ Yusef was unmoved. He had demanded and expected to obtain a large tribute and an annuity from Sweden; he thought he should get something more from the United States. Further, he had built up the Tripolitan Navy to its greatest strength in over fifty years; it was as powerful as Algiers' and should bring in as much tribute. Once Sweden paid him, his ships would be free to seek other targets.⁴¹

Cathcart wrote to the U.S. Secretary of State describing Yusef's demands, but advised the government to send an armed force. The following month, he reported that Sweden had agreed to pay \$250,000 to ransom its sailors held in Tripoli, as well as to pay an annual tribute of \$20,000 to preserve future peace. To Cathcart, war or endlessly escalating demands seemed inevitable; he recommended war.⁴²

CHAPTER 3

JEFFERSON SENDS THE NAVY

The First Squadron: 1801-1802

In March 1801, five days after his inauguration as President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson convened the cabinet to discuss what to do about the Barbary Pirates. He clearly preferred to deal with them with force. Since his stint as minister to France in 1785, he had believed the proper response to threats from the Barbary States was to send a fleet to intimidate or destroy the pirates. He considered payment of tribute to be an affront to the national honor.¹ However, he did have reservations about sending naval forces to the Mediterranean.

One issue was the lack of available forces. The federal budget had increased during Adams's administration to an average of \$11 million per year, of which \$2.5 million per year was spent on the navy.² By 1801, the United States had built up its fleet to thirteen frigates and twenty-three other vessels (including a number that were unseaworthy).³ The Republicans had always denounced the navy as superfluous, and when the elections of 1800 swept the Federalists from power, the Republican Congress was able to get its way. The day before Jefferson assumed office, Congress ordered all but the thirteen frigates to be sold, and seven of the retained frigates to be laid up. The crews of these vessels were to be discharged immediately.⁴ The navy expected to sell the vessels for \$280,000.⁵

Jefferson could not disagree with efforts to pare expenses. After all, the affront to the national honor was only a part of his complaint about paying tribute to the pirates. The other part of his complaint was the exorbitant drain on the treasury.⁶

Republican dogma declared taxes, armies, and navies to be pillars of corruption; Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin, sought to reduce all three items. The navy, which provided the least benefit to the Republicans' agrarian western and southern constituents, was first on the list to be cut. However, the reduction in the navy left him with little force available to send against the Barbary Pirates.

Jefferson had a second reservation about sending the navy to the Mediterranean. The Constitution granted to Congress the authority to declare war. The president could not do so. Jefferson had argued against presidential abuses of military power during the Adams administration. Now he was president, and he was reluctant to usurp authority he believed belonged to Congress. Jefferson's rival Hamilton sneered that Jefferson's deference to Congress was a sign of cowardice. Hamilton insisted that the president had every right--indeed, a duty--to employ the military forces of the United States against foreign enemies. Hamilton declared that since the Bashaw had declared war on the United States, it was not necessary for Congress to act.⁷

As he would show in purchasing Louisiana two years later, Jefferson was not so rigid in his beliefs as to put philosophical principles ahead of practical demands. The situation in the Mediterranean demanded action, and Jefferson believed he could pay the pirates with force as cheaply as with tribute. He therefore ordered the navy to dispatch a squadron to the Mediterranean.⁸

The Secretary of the Navy first offered command of the squadron to Captain Thomas Truxton. Truxton had distinguished himself during the Quasi-War by defeating the French ships *l'Insurgent* and *Vengeance*. Truxton turned down the offer, saying he did not care to command the squadron unless it was intended to act decisively against the pirates. Although the instructions alluded to protection of American commerce, Jefferson had not authorized decisive action. Instead, the squadron's

mission was "Instructions to our Young officers & to carry into Execution the Law fixing the Peace Establishment of the U.S."⁹

The Secretary of the Navy's next choice was Captain Richard Dale. In May 1801, Dale took command of the frigates *President*, *Philadelphia*, and *Essex* and the schooner *Enterprise* and prepared to sail to the Mediterranean "for the protection of our Commerce and the Instruction of our young Officers."¹⁰ Dale carried with him a letter of friendship from President Jefferson to the Bashaw of Tripoli. However, Jefferson and Secretary of State James Madison were aware that war with the Bashaw was likely. Dale's instructions included provisions that in the event of war, he should blockade the ports of the Barbary States and to sink, burn, and destroy Barbary vessels.¹¹

When Dale arrived at Gibraltar, he learned the Bashaw had declared war.¹² Following his demands to the American Consul James Cathcart in October, the Bashaw had repeatedly insisted the United States pay annual tribute. Cathcart insisted the peace treaty of 1796 stipulated no tribute, and he suggested referring the dispute to the Dey of Algiers. Yusef continued his demands, and to Cathcart war seemed inevitable. By February 1801, Cathcart was advising American ships in the Mediterranean to travel in convoy. The Bashaw finally declared war on 14 May 1801 by chopping down the flagpole at the U.S. Consul's house in Tripoli.¹³

As Dale lay anchored at Gibraltar, he observed the flagship of the High Admiral of Tripoli also at anchor. The flagship was the *Meshouda*, which had been the American *Betsy* until the Tripolitans captured it in 1796. The High Admiral was a renegade Scot named Peter Lisle. Lisle had been a sailor on the similarly named *Betsey* when the Moroccans captured it in 1785. When the United States ransomed the crew of the *Betsey*, Lisle stayed behind and converted to Islam, taking the name Murad Reis. Lisle traveled to Tripoli, and by virtue of his nautical skills and marriage to the

Bashaw's daughter, he rose to command of the Tripolitan navy.¹⁴ Dale could do nothing to Reis in the neutral British harbor, so he departed for Tripoli, leaving the *Philadelphia* to watch the *Meshouda*.¹⁵

Dale arrived off Tripoli in late July and began patrolling. On 1 August, the *Enterprise* engaged a Tripolitan corsair, which the Americans captured in a one-sided battle. The commander of the *Enterprise* cut down the corsair's masts and had her guns thrown overboard, then left the vessel to drift ashore. This first engagement of a Barbary ship by an American warship earned the crew of the *Enterprise* an extra month's pay.¹⁶

Dale attempted to blockade Tripoli, but with his tiny squadron he accomplished little. He attempted to sail home in November 1801, but his ship, the 44-gun frigate *President*, struck a rock and had to berth in Toulon for repairs. He finally returned to the United States in April 1802.¹⁷

The Second Squadron: 1802-1803

Albert Gallatin had hoped to reduce the navy in 1801, but because of the war against Tripoli was unable to do so. The seven frigates that had been intended to be laid up a year before were still available in February 1802. On 6 February, Congress finally passed an act to authorize the President to use force against Tripoli.¹⁸ Jefferson therefore ordered a second squadron to the Mediterranean, this time under the command of Captain Richard Valentine Morris. Morris's squadron consisted of six frigates, in addition to three already in the Mediterranean. The 32-gun frigate *U.S.S. Constellation*,¹⁹ commanded by Captain Alexander Murray, reached the Mediterranean a month ahead of Morris and immediately began patrolling around Malta.²⁰

Morris was the son of Lewis Morris, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and nephew of prominent statesman Gouverneur Morris. Unfortunately,

he lacked their better qualities. Despite having command of a strong force, he failed to demonstrate any energy in dealing with the pirates. Instead, he conducted what resembled a grand pleasure cruise. He brought his wife, children, and maid with him on board his flagship, the *Chesapeake*.²¹ He allowed his sailors to bring wives also. He appeared little disposed to place wives and children in danger, and his fleet made no effort to confront the enemy.²²

At about the same time Morris arrived in the Mediterranean, Morocco declared war on the United States. Morris stayed in the vicinity of Gibraltar for most of the summer, until Morocco agreed to resume peaceful relations. Mrs. Morris delighted in the social life of the British colony, and the Commodore demonstrated no hurry to get on to Tripoli. The Emperor of Morocco made impossible demands, but took no hostile actions. He demanded release of the *Meshouda*, which the Americans were still blockading in Gibraltar. The Emperor claimed the ship belonged to Morocco, not to Tripoli. Morris eventually allowed the *Meshouda* to depart Gibraltar.²³

Morris finally left Gibraltar in August 1802, but instead of sailing to Tripoli he went to Leghorn.²⁴ Morris then sailed to Malta, where he spent a pleasant fall and winter. In February, Morris departed for Tunis, which was threatening to go to war with the United States.

Morris came ashore at Tunis and persuaded the Bey to keep the peace. However, the Bey demanded that Morris pay the debts of the American consul, William Eaton. Eaton had borrowed heavily to finance various private ventures, including ransoming a countess and outfitting a privateer. Morris refused to pay the debts. He disliked Eaton, who had bitterly complained of Morris's conduct of the war. The Bey had Morris arrested and would not allow him to leave until Eaton's debt was paid. Eaton managed to scrape together \$12,000, and Morris borrowed an additional

\$22,000 to pay the debt. Upon receiving this money, the Bey released Morris and Eaton.²⁵ No longer welcome in Tunis, Eaton returned to the United States. Morris sailed back to Gibraltar and remained there for several weeks.

Finally, in April 1803, Morris sailed for Tripoli. After nearly a year in the Mediterranean, he finally got around to the confronting the enemy. He might as well have stayed home. On the evening of 27 May, he led the squadron into a badly conceived attack on Tripoli Harbor. He engaged a fleet of Tripolitan gunboats that were nearly invisible against the background of the coast; his own ships were clearly silhouetted against the horizon. Only the timidity of the Tripolitans and the luck of the Americans allowed the squadron to escape disaster.²⁶

A few days later, Lieutenant Isaac Hull, commanding the *Enterprise*, discovered ten Tripolitan boats landing wheat on a beach three miles outside Tripoli. The next day, the Americans attempted a landing to burn the wheat. The attempt failed, but it gave Hull an opportunity to participate in a naval bombardment against the Tripolitan force on shore that guarded the wheat.²⁷

Morris concluded at this point that a blockade of Tripoli was not feasible, so he returned to Malta. America's prestige in the Mediterranean was at its lowest point. The Tripolitans considered the Americans to be cowardly and ineffectual.²⁸

Jefferson had much cause for dissatisfaction with Morris and with the inability of the navy to subdue the Tripolitans. Morris had more forces available than his predecessor Dale, but had accomplished less. Jefferson therefore relieved Morris and called him home in the summer of 1803.

The Third Squadron: Preble Takes Command 1803-1804

In February 1803, Congress authorized expansion of the navy by four small ships and fifteen gunboats; despite Gallatin's wishes to reduce the navy, it was slowly gaining strength.²⁹ Although Morris had accomplished almost nothing against the Tripolitans, Jefferson was not ready to give up. He decided to send a new squadron to the Mediterranean, commanded by a more vigorous commodore.

Jefferson first turned to Captain Dale. Dale, however, wanted to be the first admiral of the United States Navy, and when the honor was refused, he resigned. Jefferson's next choice was old Captain John Barry, who had served in the Revolution. Barry, however, was ill and soon to die. Third choice was Captain Edward Preble.³⁰ Preble at the time was in Boston, supervising construction of one of the small ships recently authorized by Congress. This ship, the brig *Argus*, was to prove the fastest sailer of the four new ships. It would serve as Isaac Hull's ship two years later during the assault on Derne.³¹ On 14 May 1803, Preble took command of the 44-gun frigate *Constitution*.³² A week later, the Secretary of the navy expanded Preble's orders to include the 38-gun frigate *Philadelphia*, the schooner *Enterprise*, and the four newly acquired ships. One of the new ships had been recently purchased and the rest were still under construction.³³

Construction proceeded quickly, and the *Argus* was launched on 21 August 1803, only three months after her keel was laid.³⁴ Preble had in the meantime refitted the *Constitution* and coppered her bottom. He sailed only a week before the *Argus* was launched.³⁵

Preble was an energetic and capable officer. Unlike Morris, he was a strict disciplinarian. He would not allow families and servants on his ships. At first his subordinates were frightened by him and disliked his taut discipline. However, they

soon recognized he had mettle. Unlike Morris, Preble came to the Mediterranean to fight and to win. He knew how to handle a ship and how to handle a fleet.

By the time he left the Mediterranean, his officers held him in the highest esteem. He was a mentor and a teacher; the officers who served under him in the Mediterranean included the greatest naval heroes of the War of 1812: Hull, Decatur, MacDonough, Bainbridge, Lawrence, and Porter. Under Preble in 1803-1804, these men--"Preble's Boys"--would learn how to fight. "Preble's Boys" won all but one of the American naval victories during the War of 1812.³⁶

Captain William Bainbridge, commanding the *Philadelphia*, arrived in the Mediterranean ahead of Preble. He briefly stopped at Gibraltar, where he learned two Tripolitan cruisers were in the area. He immediately sailed, and the same night he came upon a Moroccan ship, the *Mirboka*, which had just captured an American merchant brig. Bainbridge took possession of both vessels and brought them back to Gibraltar. He released the American brig and held the Moroccans. Morocco had not declared war on the United States, so the *Mirboka* appeared to be a plain pirate. However, the captain of the *Mirboka* had apparently genuine orders from the governor of Tangier directing him to seize American, Swedish, Danish, Dutch, Russian, and Prussian ships. When Preble arrived, he, Bainbridge, and the new Consul to Algiers, Tobias Lear, considered what action to take relative to Morocco.³⁷

The next day, Captain John Rodgers of the *John Adams* arrived with his prize, the *Meshouda*. The American squadron had blockaded the *Meshouda* in Gibraltar for two years, until Morris let it leave to soothe the Emperor of Morocco. However, despite the Emperor's claim that the *Meshouda* was Moroccan, not Tripolitan, once Morris let it go it sailed for Tripoli.³⁸ The *John Adams* found the *Meshouda* sailing off Tripoli in May and captured her. (This was the first ship the Americans captured since Morris arrived in the Mediterranean.) Captain Rodgers took

his prize to Naples, where he repaired both it and the *John Adams* before continuing to Gibraltar in July.³⁹ The actions of the *Meshouda* and the *Mirboka* indicated Morocco had broken its peace treaty with the United States.⁴⁰

Preble wasted little time. He sailed to Tangier with the *Constitution* and the *John Adams*. The Moroccans invited Preble ashore, but Preble did not care to follow Morris's example and get himself arrested. Instead he ordered the *John Adams* to sail southwest to the Moroccan port of Mogador, where an American ship was reported to have been seized. He returned to Gibraltar to issue orders to Bainbridge and the other captains to establish an aggressive blockade of Tripoli.⁴¹

Preble returned to Tangier with the *Constitution* and four other ships. This time he did go ashore, but only after instructing his ships to bombard the town should he be detained. Preble, accompanied by Tobias Lear and two midshipmen, rowed ashore and then passed through crowds of spectators and streets lined with the Emperor's soldiers. When he came before the Emperor, he refused to kneel. The Emperor, impressed by Preble's person as well as by the American ships, agreed to honor the peace treaty between Morocco and the United States. He also ordered the American ship at Mogador to be released.⁴²

With Morocco back in line, Preble sailed to Tripoli to deal with the Bashaw. Before he got there, however, he learned of a catastrophe: On 1 November 1803, the *Philadelphia* had run aground and been captured by the Tripolitans. This disaster not only reduced the strength of Preble's squadron but gave the Tripolitans one of the fastest and strongest frigates in the world. The crew of the *Philadelphia* were now captives of the Bashaw.⁴³

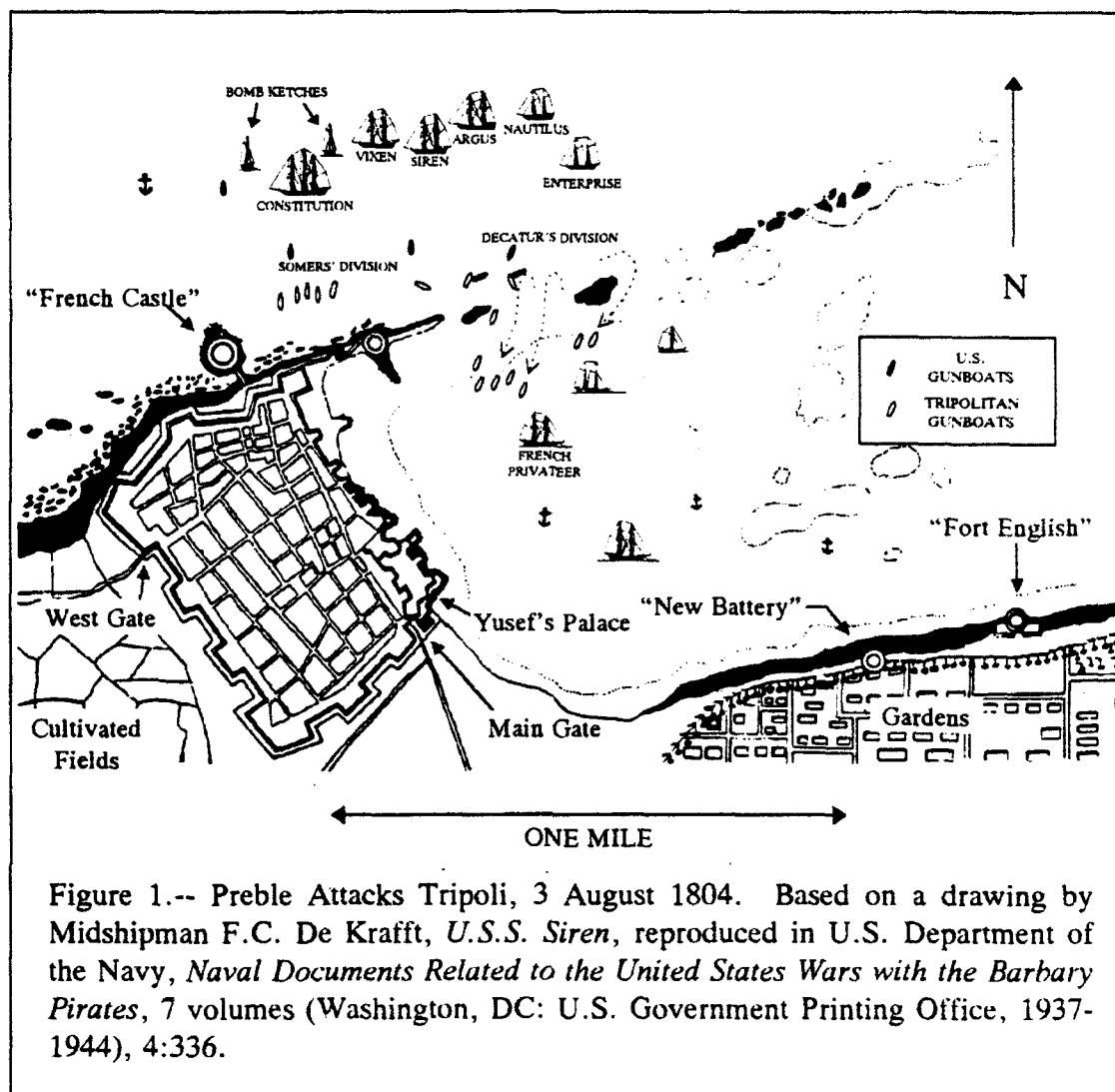
Preble began planning a response. He did not believe he could recover the *Philadelphia*, so the next best option was to destroy the ship to keep it from the Tripolitans. He therefore ordered Lieutenant Stephen Decatur to sail the ketch *Intrepid*

into Tripoli harbor to burn the *Philadelphia*. Winter storms delayed the mission, but on the night of 16 February 1804, Decatur and a small crew sailed their little ketch into Tripoli harbor and boarded the *Philadelphia*. They quickly gained control of the ship and succeeded in completely destroying it. Lord Nelson called Decatur's raid "the most bold and daring act of the age," and Congress awarded him a sword and his crew a bonus of two months' pay.⁴⁴

Preble meanwhile began to assemble gunboats in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies for further attacks against Tripoli.⁴⁵ Before Preble could attack Tripoli, he had to briefly visit Tunis, where the Bey was beginning to make hostile noises. After assuring himself that the Bey would not act for the time being, Preble returned to Tripoli in June 1804. Because the Bashaw held the crew of the *Philadelphia* as hostages, Preble felt obliged to attempt negotiations. When he was unable to obtain satisfaction, he sailed back to Syracuse to fetch his gunboats.⁴⁶

Preble needed the gunboats to attack Tripolitan ships inside the harbor. He could not safely reach the enemy vessels with his frigates and brigs. A line of rocks protected the northern edge of the harbor, while hazardous shoals and sandbars partially obstructed the eastern entrance. From outside the harbor, Preble's ships could not effectively engage vessels in the harbor or fire on the Bashaw's palace. A frigate or brig, taking care to avoid the shoals, could enter the harbor, but then would be little space to maneuver.

On 3 August 1804, Preble's squadron was assembled off Tripoli and the wind was favorable. He began his attack. Six gunboats and two bomb vessels sailed into the harbor, while the *Constitution* and five smaller brigs and schooners provided covering fire. The Tripolitans assembled a force of gunboats and galleys to meet the Americans. The action quickly devolved to hand-to-hand combat as the vessels closed and the Americans boarded the Tripolitan boats. The Americans, although



outnumbered, fought with a ferocity that dispelled their reputation as cowards. Stephen Decatur, in particular, distinguished himself by capturing three gunboats. The only American killed was Decatur's brother James, who was shot as he boarded a Tripolitan boat that had feigned surrender. Preble called off the attack when the wind shifted late in the afternoon.⁴⁷

On 7 August, Preble launched another attack, now reinforced with the three captured gunboats. He bombarded the city for three hours, causing considerable

damage. The enemy gunboats withdrew under the protection of the harbor forts. A heated shot from one of the Tripolitan forts struck one of the Americans' newly captured gunboats and caused an explosion that killed ten sailors. Four other Americans also died. Preble again withdrew when the wind shifted in the late afternoon.⁴⁸

Three days later the Bashaw offered peace if the Americans were willing to pay \$150,000. Preble declined. On 24 August he sent his gunboats in on a night attack. His vessels bombarded the town, and one 36 pound shot nearly hit the captive Captain Bainbridge as he lay sleeping in his prison room. The ball knocked down a brick wall, and the falling bricks buried his right leg.⁴⁹

On 28 August Preble returned for his fiercest bombardment yet. He sailed the *Constitution* into the harbor and blasted the harbor forts into silence. The *Constitution* sank one gunboat and damaged two others, then fired three hundred round shot into the town.⁵⁰ Sailing the *Constitution* into the harbor was extremely risky. The harbor entrance had several dangerous shoals, and once in the harbor the big frigate had little room for maneuver. That Preble took the risk indicates his nearly desperate desire to defeat Tripoli, as well as his contempt for the skill of the gunners in Tripoli's harbor batteries.

On 3 September, the Tripolitan Admiral, Murad Reis (formerly Peter Lisle), sent his gunboats and galleys to a position from which they could attack the Americans should Preble again enter the harbor. Preble sent his own gunboats after the Tripolitan vessels, while his bomb vessels sailed into the harbor to bombard the town. The bomb vessels caused enormous damage. The Tripolitans began to focus all their shore batteries on the bomb vessels, and Preble was apprehensive that a lucky shot might sink one, so he ordered them to withdraw. To cover them, he again sailed the

Constitution into the harbor, where it dealt considerable damage to the shore batteries and drove the Tripolitans from their guns.⁵¹

The next day, Preble sent the *Intrepid* back into Tripoli Harbor. This time it was commanded by Lieutenant Richard Somers, and its mission was to serve as a fireship. The plan was to sail the ketch into the harbor, where the crew would set her afire and then escape, leaving the burning vessel to ignite the Tripolitan ships and gunboats. Unfortunately, the *Intrepid* blew up prematurely. All aboard the *Intrepid* were killed, and the Tripolitans suffered no injury.⁵²

After word of the loss of the *Philadelphia* had reached the United States, President Jefferson asked Congress for additional appropriations to enlarge the navy. Congress responded by authorizing construction of two new ships and the hiring of additional gunboats in the Mediterranean. To pay for the new vessels, Congress raised the *ad valorem* import tax by 2½ percent.⁵³

As an immediate measure, Jefferson ordered additional ships to the Mediterranean. A squadron under Captain Samuel Barron, consisting of the 44-gun *President*, the 36-gun *Congress*, the 36-gun *Constellation*, and the 32-gun *Essex*, sailed in July 1804 to reinforce Preble's squadron.⁵⁴ Preble learned on 7 August that his time was nearly up. Barron was senior to Preble and would take command of the entire Mediterranean Squadron. On 10 September, Barron arrived off Tripoli. Two days later, Preble sailed home.⁵⁵

The strong-willed and aggressive Preble had not subdued the Tripolitans; now, with more forces at his disposal, it was Barron's turn to try. Barron, unfortunately, was more like a Morris than a Preble. Furthermore, he soon became ill and lethargic. However, he brought with him William Eaton, former Consul to Tunis, a man who had a plan that might end the war.

CHAPTER 4

EATON RETURNS TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Irascible William Eaton

William Eaton was physically imposing. He was tall and powerfully built, with piercing blue eyes beneath a high forehead. In college he had been a track star. He was arrogant, opinionated, and short tempered. He was intensely patriotic. He had little patience for fools, traitors, and incompetents--which he seemed to think included nearly anyone who disagreed with him. His hero was "Mad" Anthony Wayne, whom he described as "firm in constitution [and] in resolution; industrious; indefatigable, determined, and persevering; fixed in opinion and unbiased in judgment." All but perhaps the last quality applied to Eaton himself.¹

Eaton was born in Connecticut in 1764, the second son of a farmer. When he was 15, he ran away from home to join Washington's army during the War of Independence. He returned home a few months later due to illness, but ran away a second time and served until the end of the war. He was a 19 year old sergeant when the war ended.²

Eaton felt no inclination to become a farmer; as a boy he had often neglected his chores so he could read books. He taught himself a considerable dose of Greek, Latin, history, and philosophy. After the War of Independence he wanted to enter Dartmouth College, but he lacked money for tuition. Fortunately for him, his self-taught knowledge impressed the Dartmouth faculty, and they allowed him to attend classes in exchange for assisting as a teacher. He graduated from Dartmouth in 1790, and for a time he was a schoolteacher.³

When President Washington sent General Anthony Wayne to suppress the Indians in the Ohio valley in 1792, Eaton applied for and received a captain's commission in the regular army. Eaton participated in the defense of Fort Recovery in June 1793 and later was with Wayne's army at the Battle of Fallen Timbers (20 August 1794), where Wayne defeated the Indian confederacy. During the campaign, Eaton distinguished himself as an energetic and self-confident officer, although some of his fellow officers found him too quarrelsome. During training maneuvers, he once broke into a violent rage when the adjutant general of the maneuvers, Captain Edward Butler, countermanded Eaton's marching orders. For a short time it seemed Eaton had forgotten the Indians: the adjutant general was his enemy. Friends reconciled the two officers.⁴ That Butler was a favorite of General Wayne may have helped cool Eaton's wrath.⁵ Eaton was not above toadying to superiors whom he respected and admired.

One such person was Timothy Pickering. Eaton came to Pickering's attention while Pickering was in the Northwest Territory as a commissioner to the Indians in 1793-1794. Pickering asked Eaton to keep him informed about the status of the army. Eaton complied, thereby earning a powerful friend. Eaton's reports continued when Pickering became Secretary of War (1795) and later Secretary of State.⁶

After Fallen Timbers, Eaton returned to Philadelphia and then transferred to the western Georgia frontier. Soon arriving in Georgia, he quarreled with his commanding officer, whom he accused of illegal land deals. The commander, Colonel Henry Gaither, had Eaton arrested and court-martialed for disobedience, selling public corn, and defrauding the troops of rations. Eaton countered that the accusation was inspired because he had refused to buy some land from Colonel Gaither. The court-martial found Eaton guilty and suspended him for two months.⁷

Eaton traveled to Philadelphia, where he succeeded in having the court-martial overturned. However, he felt he could not return to his post while Colonel Gaither remained in command, so he left active service at the end of 1796. He remained in Philadelphia and performed services for Pickering, who was now President Adams's Secretary of State. One of the tasks Pickering gave him was to go to New York and bring back the person and papers of one Dr. Nicholas Romaine. A committee of Congress wanted Romaine's testimony, but the doctor had eluded summons. Eaton brought in Romaine and his papers. Pickering commended Eaton's zeal, and as reward for his services, in 1797 Pickering appointed Eaton as U.S. Consul to Tunis.⁸

Eaton would seem a poor choice as a diplomat. Unlike fellow consuls James Cathcart and Richard O'Brien, Eaton had little understanding of the people and customs of North Africa. Cathcart and O'Brien were both former captives of the Algerian corsairs. Cathcart, while captive, had risen to become the Dey's secretary. Cathcart and O'Brien knew the rules for dealing with Barbary potentates and were familiar with the pattern of negotiations between European consuls and the Barbary rulers.⁹

Eaton had no such familiarity, and he appears to have been far from diplomatic in his interpersonal relations. He remained as chauvinistic and quarrelsome as ever. Tact was not a strong point for him. He had little charity for what he did not understand. When he met the Dey of Algiers in 1799, he reported to Secretary Pickering:

...we were shown to a huge, shaggy beast, sitting on his rump, upon a low bench, covered with a cushion of embroidered velvet, with his hind legs gathered up like a tailor, or a bear. On our approach to him, he reached out his fore paw as if to receive something to eat. Our guide exclaimed, "Kiss the Dey's hand!" The consul general [O'Brien] bowed *very elegantly*, and kissed it; and we followed his example in succession. The animal

seemed at that moment to be in a harmless mode; he grinned several times, but made very little noise.¹⁰

Although Eaton spoke several languages, Arabic was not one of them. Pickering liked him, however, and that was enough to get him the consular appointment.

Eaton did not obtain passage to the Mediterranean until December 1798, when he sailed on the same ship that carried James Cathcart. Cathcart's tardiness in Tripoli was a source of great affront to the Bashaw there. Eaton was nearly as late arriving in Tunis, but the Bey of Tunis seemed less offended by the delay.

When Eaton arrived in Tunis, the Bey was reluctant to recognize him as the American representative. The Bey preferred Joseph Famin, a French merchant who had been appointed to represent U.S. interests in 1797. Famin had not served the United States well, which is not surprising since France and the United States were engaged in an undeclared war. Famin had apparently conspired with the Bey to milk the United States of as much money as possible. Eaton acted with typical directness: he horsewhipped Famin in a public street. The Bey had Eaton arrested, but Eaton defended himself well in the Tunisian tribunal. He demonstrated that Famin had been deceitful. He also produced a document in which Famin referred to the Tunisian prime minister as a thief and robber. The tribunal acquitted Eaton, and Famin left town.¹¹

Eaton soon encountered the demands for bribes and gifts that were customary in Tunis. He bluffed and bullied his way out of paying many of the bribes. He also encountered the Bey's dissatisfaction with America's attention to treaty obligations. Under the treaty of 1797 (negotiated by the American agent Joel Barlow and the duplicitous Famin), the United States was supposed to provide naval stores as part of an annual tribute. The stores were late because the American brig *Hero*, which was supposed to carry the stores, had sprung a leak. The Bey became anxious and began to threaten war. Tunisian corsairs got their ships ready. The Bey issued an

ultimatum, but fortunately for the United States, the *Hero* arrived before the final deadline.¹²

The Tunisian corsairs had been looking forward to capturing American ships. They consoled themselves by attacking the Danes. The Danes had been meeting their annual tribute payments on time, but since their fleet was committed in the North Sea and the Baltic, they seemed a suitable target. The Tunisians concocted a complaint that the Danes were sending inferior goods as tribute, and the corsairs went to work. The corsairs brought in several prize ships, which they pillaged and sold at auction. Eaton bought six with borrowed money. He paid much less than the market value, but instead of making a handsome profit he sold them back at the same price to their original owners. The King of Denmark sent him thanks.¹³

Annual tribute ships arrived with minimal delays in 1800, 1801, and 1802, which aided Eaton in keeping the Tunisians at peace with the United States. However, the Bey occasionally demanded additional payments. Eaton bluntly refused. When the Bey hinted that the United States should give him additional tributes or consular presents, Eaton hinted the United States should give cannonballs instead. When a fire damaged the Bey's palace, the Bey demanded that the Europeans and America should make up his losses. Eaton refused even to forward the Bey's request to the American government.¹⁴ At first the Bey found Eaton amusing, but over time he tired of the uncompromising American.

After Tripoli declared war on the United States, Eaton observed the course of the war with tremendous frustration. Dale's squadron accomplished almost nothing, and Morris was even less effectual. He wrote to President Jefferson's Secretary of State, James Madison, and to the other consuls bitterly criticizing the navy's conduct of the war. The "government may as well send out Quaker Meeting houses to float about this sea as frigates with Murrays in command," he wrote to Madison.¹⁵ In his journal

he wrote, "I would recommend to the government of the United States to station a company of comedians and a seraglio [a large harem] before the enemy's port."¹⁶ His complaints accomplished little except to earn him the resentment of senior naval officers, including Captains Morris, Murray, and Barron.

In late 1801, James Cathcart suggested to Eaton that the United States might find a use for Yusef Caramanli's brother Hamet. Hamet had been ruler of Tripoli for a few months in 1795 before Yusef overthrew him. Cathcart suggested that Hamet was the legitimate heir to the throne of Tripoli. Perhaps if the United States could restore Hamet to his throne he would in turn prove much friendlier than Yusef. Eaton immediately championed the idea. He contacted Hamet, who was then in exile in Tunis, and offered the possibility of American assistance.¹⁷

Eaton wrote to Captain Murray of the *Constellation*. Murray, sailing a month ahead of Commodore Morris, was for the moment the senior U.S. naval officer in the Mediterranean. Eaton recommended American aid for Hamet. Eaton also offered the use of the *Gloria*, a brig he had purchased and armed at his own expense, as a reinforcement to the Mediterranean squadron. Murray refused the *Gloria* and wrote Eaton a note disapproving the scheme to aid Hamet. Old, deaf, and stubborn, Murray may have been particularly unwilling to accept Eaton's help because of Eaton's vehement criticism of the navy's performance.

Eaton did not give up on the scheme to use Hamet. He gave Hamet money and arranged for him to move to Malta, where he might be safer from Yusef's agents.¹⁸ By August 1802, however, Hamet was restive and disappointed that the Americans had not acted to return him to power in Tripoli. Yusef offered him governorship of the outlying town of Derne, and he was willing to accept, although this would put him under Yusef's power. Eaton heard about Yusef's offer and persuaded Hamet that Yusef was merely attempting to lure Hamet to Derne to murder him. Eaton

also sent \$2,000 to encourage Hamet to remain in Malta. Hamet, frightened, first agreed to stay, but in December he chartered a British ship and sailed to Derne.

When Hamet entered Derne, he declared that he was not Yusef's governor, but the rightful Bashaw reclaiming a portion of his country. However, he failed to gain complete possession of the town, and Yusef soon sent a force to expel him. Hamet's forces defeated the first assault by Yusef's forces, but Yusef had plenty of reinforcements coming. Hamet appealed to President Jefferson for assistance and claimed that with American help he could march to Tripoli. No help came, and in July 1803 Hamet fled to Egypt.¹⁹

Eaton by this time despaired of any progress in American relations with the Barbary States. The Bey of Tunis, having observed how ineffectual Morris's squadron was against Tripoli, began making warlike noises. Eaton found he could no longer answer the Bey's demands with threats of naval action, because the U.S. Navy was so clearly unable to make the threats good. Eaton requested to be relieved.²⁰ In letters to the Secretary of State he expressed his continuing frustration at the navy's failure to accomplish anything.²¹

Besides feeling frustrated and homesick, Eaton had run up considerable debt. He had invested in two ships--the *Gloria* and the *Morning Star*. The U.S. Navy had refused the use of the *Gloria* as a privateer, so Eaton tried to use both vessels to carry cargo. Unfortunately, he could get no cargoes because of the war with Tripoli and bad relations with Tunisian merchants. He had financed his mercantile operations by borrowing money at high interest. He had also borrowed on personal credit to finance Hamet in Malta.

An additional expense had been his ransoming of a young Sardinian countess, Maria Anna Porcile, whose ship had been captured by Tunisian corsairs. Eaton paid \$6,000 to save her from the harem of the prime minister of Tunis. The

countess lived with Eaton for six months while he tried to obtain reimbursement from her father. The father never paid.²²

In January 1803, the *U.S.S. Enterprise* captured a Tunisian vessel, the *Paulina*, that was trying to run the blockade of Tripoli. The Bey of Tunis demanded the release of the vessel. Eaton told him the vessel had been attempting to run the blockade and was a legitimate prize under the laws of war. The Bey responded that he was at war with Naples and Genoa and could therefore order his ships to seize American vessels trading with these ports. Eaton wrote to Morris explaining the situation and recommending immediate action.

Morris sailed to Tunis, where he appeased the Bey by agreeing to settle the disposition of the *Paulina* in Tunis, rather than in a prize court in Gibraltar. However, when Morris attempted to leave Tunis, the Bey had him arrested. The Bey told Morris he must pay Eaton's debts. As related in the last chapter, Morris and Eaton scraped together \$34,000 to pay off the debt. When Morris left Tunis, so did Eaton.

Eaton returned to the United States, where he pressed members of Congress and the Jefferson Administration to adopt his scheme for using Hamet to overthrow Yusef. Although the naval officers in the Mediterranean had turned down the idea, Jefferson liked it. The scheme seemed to offer an inexpensive means of defeating Yusef, so Jefferson authorized Eaton to try it. In the summer of 1804 Eaton accompanied Commodore Barron back to the Mediterranean.

Who's in Charge: Barron and Lear

In September 1804, as Commodore Prèble sailed back to America, two men were responsible for directing the execution of U.S. policy in the Mediterranean. One was the military commander, Commodore Barron. The other was the Consul General to Algiers, Tobias Lear.

Upon arriving in the Mediterranean, Commodore Barron had command of the largest American naval force yet assembled: six frigates, two brigs, and three schooners, plus six gunboats and two bomb ketches borrowed from the King of Naples. He did not immediately resume Preble's attacks on Tripoli. Winter weather would soon prevent further bombardments anyway, so Barron led the squadron back to bases in Malta and Syracuse. From these bases he rotated ships to maintain the blockade of Tripoli, keeping two to five ships on station through the winter. He returned the gunboats and bomb ketches to the King of Naples.²³

The Secretary of the Navy's instructions to Commodore Barron gave the commodore permission to use Hamet, "if you shall upon a full view of the subject after your arrival upon the Station, consider his co-operation expedient. The subject is committed entirely to your discretion." Barron's instructions advised Barron that Eaton could be helpful.²⁴

Barron became ill soon after arriving in the Mediterranean and lacked the strength to conduct the war aggressively. Through the winter of 1804-1805 he lay ashore. Fortunately, Captain Rodgers, Barron's second in command, was more energetic. It was Rodgers who ensured the squadron maintained the blockade of Tripoli.²⁵ Barron himself was unable to accomplish any positive results.

Eaton returned to the Mediterranean bearing the title "U.S. Naval Agent for the Barbary Regencies." His appointment directed him to receive instructions from and obey the orders of Commodore Barron.²⁶ Through the winter, Barron was no more disposed to act on the Hamet scheme than on further bombardments of Tripoli, and he gave little direction to either effort. In the case of bombarding Tripoli, Barron's inaction meant nothing happened. In the case of Hamet, Barron's inaction meant Eaton was free to pursue the scheme with little oversight or interference.

Colonel Tobias Lear, who had once been George Washington's secretary, replaced Richard O'Brien as U.S. Consul General to Algiers in November 1803. As Consul General to Algiers, Lear acted as the senior American consular official in North Africa, empowered to direct the efforts of the consuls in Tunis and Tangier. He also served as Barron's chief advisor on relations with the Barbary States. With military operations nearly at a standstill and Barron incapacitated by illness, Lear took the lead in directing U.S. activities. In October 1804, Lear moved from Algiers to Malta, where Barron lay ill. Barron and Lear remained in Malta until the conclusion of hostilities.²⁷

In April 1804, President Jefferson charged Lear with full responsibility for negotiating peace with Tripoli. Lear's instructions authorized him to pay up to \$500 for each of *Philadelphia's* 301 sailors and officers of held by the Bashaw of Tripoli. The instructions also authorized him to spend \$20,000 to support Hamet Caramanli if Commodore Barron decided to use Hamet. Madison advised Lear to put little reliance on using Hamet because Barron's squadron was strong enough to coerce the Bashaw into a peace settlement without Hamet's aid.²⁸

Lear agreed the Mediterranean squadron was strong enough to compel Tripoli to settle. Furthermore, he believed Hamet was too weak a character to be worthy of U.S. support. Writing to Madison in November 1804, Lear noted that Hamet had been driven from Derne, "where he might have made a stand, had he been a man of any force or influence; which from the best of accounts I can collect, he is not." Lear went on to say that even if Hamet regained the throne of Tripoli, "I should place much more confidence in the continuance of a peace with the present Bashaw, if he is well beaten into it, than I should have with the other, if he should be placed on the throne by our means."²⁹ Lear endeavored to persuade Barron to withdraw his support

for Eaton's expedition. During the winter of 1804-1805, Barron showed increasing coolness toward Eaton, but he did not act to stop him.

The Hunt for Hamet

While several of the navy's senior officers were hostile to Eaton and his expedition, Barron's second-in-command, Captain Rodgers, was enthusiastic about the scheme. He provided a brig, the *U.S.S. Argus*, to convey Eaton to Egypt. The commander of the *Argus*, Captain Isaac Hull, shared Rodgers's enthusiasm for Eaton's expedition.

Eaton sailed from Malta on 15 November 1804 and arrived in Alexandria, Egypt, on 26 November 1804.³⁰ The British Consul, Samuel Briggs, came on board the *Argus* to welcome the Americans. Notwithstanding accusations that the Barbary Pirates were a tool of British commercial policy, the British had shown great friendship and assistance to the Americans throughout the Tripolitan War. In Alexandria, Consul Briggs and his brothers proved of great assistance to Eaton. Eaton borrowed freely from the Briggs brothers' banking operation in Alexandria to finance the Hamet expedition.³¹

To begin his campaign against Tripoli, Eaton first had to find Hamet, who had disappeared into the desert south of Cairo and was believed to have fallen in with the Mamelukes. Egypt in 1804 was full of chaos and intrigue. Remnants of the army Napoleon deserted in 1798 remained in Egypt, as well as British adventurers, the nominal Turkish rulers, and adventurers of many other nationalities. The Mamelukes were in open rebellion against Turkish rule and at times seemed likely to capture Cairo. The Turkish Viceroy, Ahmed Pasha Khorshid, was fighting desperately to restore Turkish authority after the anarchy of successive French and British invasions. He dispatched Muhammed Ali, the popular (and therefore dangerous) commander of

Cairo's Albanian garrison, to fight the Mamelukes. Before Eaton's adventure was over, Muhammed Ali would return to Cairo and overthrow Khorshid. Muhammed Ali would go on to be known as the father of modern Egypt.³²

Immediately upon arriving in Alexandria, Eaton prepared to travel to Cairo to begin his search for Hamet. Captain Hull allowed several members of *Argus's* crew to accompany Eaton, including Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant Joshua Blake of the navy, two midshipmen, a seaman, and a marine private. One of the midshipmen was Eli Danielson, Eaton's stepson. Hamet's English secretary, Richard Farquhar, also accompanied Eaton.³³

Eaton's party sailed for Rosetta on 29 November. On the way, they paused at Abukir Bay, where the British had conducted their successful amphibious assault against Napoleon's forces in 1801. The ground was still littered with human skeletons.³⁴

At Rosetta, the party met Major Misset, the British Resident at Cairo. Misset was in Rosetta to escape the dangers of the Mameluke rebellion raging in and around Cairo. Doctor Francisco Mendrici accompanied Major Misset. Eaton had known Mendrici when the latter was physician to the Bey of Tunis in 1803; since then he had gained considerable influence in Egypt. His presence proved quite helpful to Eaton.³⁵

Eaton's party, now reinforced by Mendrici and Major Misset's secretary, sailed up the Nile in two barges on 4 December. The party was well armed to defend itself from bandits and roving parties of renegade soldiers. On the second day of the journey, the party passed a village ransacked by five hundred Albanian deserters from the Turkish forces. Eaton felt relieved the Albanians had moved on, as he doubted his party's weapons would have held off an attack by such a large force. The next day, the

party narrowly escaped an assault by a band of Turks after one of the party's servants imprudently fired a musket.³⁶

When the party reached Cairo on 8 December, Dr. Mendrici arranged an audience for Eaton with the Turkish Viceroy of Egypt. Khorshid was friendly, but he expressed misgivings about aiding Hamet, if Hamet had really joined the rebellious Mamelukes as reported. The Viceroy's suspicions may have been fanned by whisperings from the French agent in Cairo, who claimed Eaton and his party were British spies. The French, in contrast to the British, consistently worked to thwart American interests during the Tripolitan War.³⁷

Khorshid agreed to send couriers to seek out Hamet. He also wrote out an amnesty to allow Hamet to pass through the Turkish army on his way out of Egypt. Getting past the Turks, however, was only part of Hamet's problem. He also had to slip away from his Mameluke comrades, who might object to his desertion.³⁸

By the end of December Eaton had received no word from Hamet. Eaton became impatient and anxious as his stay in Cairo continued. He began to wonder whether Khorshid's amnesty was a trap to lure Hamet to Cairo to be seized by the Turks as a Mameluke rebel. By 8 January he was preparing to ride into the desert to find Hamet himself.³⁹

Captain Hull in Alexandria also grew concerned, for he lacked supplies to wait much longer for Eaton to return. Hull also felt uncomfortable among the characters of many nationalities and unknown loyalties who surrounded him and Eaton. Farquhar, in particular, he distrusted.⁴⁰

Eaton's entourage by this time included a variety of adventurers and soldiers of fortune. Eaton, Lieutenant O'Bannon, Danielson, and Midshipman Pascal Peck were the only Americans, Lieutenant Blake and the unidentified sailor having returned to Alexandria. Other members of Eaton's entourage included Selim the

Janissary, one of Hamet's advisors who became Eaton's personal bodyguard. Richard Farquhar was Eaton's quartermaster. Richard's younger brother George also joined Eaton's party.⁴¹

While in Cairo, Eaton found a variety of additional recruits, including the most exotic character of them all, Eugene Leitensdorfer. Leitensdorfer--an alias--was born in the Tyrol, but was a man of many countries. His parents wanted him to be a priest, but he wanted to marry; he then left his wife to become a soldier. He served with the Austrian army but then deserted to the French. The French, however, became suspicious of him and arrested him as a spy. He escaped and became a traveling salesman for a time, but he eventually rejoined the French army. He soon found himself with Napoleon in Egypt. When Napoleon abandoned Egypt, Leitensdorfer deserted to the British army in Alexandria. He ran a coffee house on the side and made enough money to marry a Coptic Christian girl. When the British left Egypt, Leitensdorfer deserted again, but not to stay with his new wife: he sailed to Messina and became a Capuchin monk. He soon tired of monastic life and traveled to Constantinople, where he joined the Turkish army. The Turks sent him to Egypt again, where he deserted again. He returned to Constantinople, converted to Islam, and joined an order of dervishes.

As a wandering dervish he passed through Trebizond, where the people demanded he use his magical powers to cure the local bey's cataracts. He put caustic lime in the man's eyes, causing him great pain and swelling the eyes shut. He washed the bey's eyes with milk, declared the man was cured, and quickly left town with a caravan of merchants. When bandits later attacked the caravan, he overheard one of them speak of a dervish who had cured the Bey of Trebizond. He returned to the city and collected a reward. He then traveled to Mecca, Jidda, Ethiopia, and Numidia. He eventually reached Alexandria, where he divorced his Coptic wife.⁴²

Leitensdorfer heard Eaton was recruiting mercenaries in Cairo, so he went there and presented himself as Colonel Jean Eugene, an Austrian engineer. He spoke excellent Arabic and he knew Arab and Turkish ways. Eaton hired him.⁴³

According to Leitensdorfer's later testimony, Eaton dispatched him to find Hamet. Leitensdorfer mounted a camel and rode into the desert with one companion. He reached Hamet ahead of Khorshid's couriers, thereby keeping Hamet out of any trap set by Khorshid. Leitensdorfer, being one of the world's experts on desertion, then proved to be just the man to help Hamet in slip away from the Mameluke camp.⁴⁴ Eaton's correspondence shows he sent Leitensdorfer to Rosetta, not in search of Hamet. Someone else--probably Khorshid's courier--delivered a letter from Eaton. Eaton's letter asked Hamet to meet him at the British consul's house in Rosetta.⁴⁵

On 8 January, Eaton still had not heard from Hamet, and he was preparing to ride into the desert himself to find Hamet. At the last moment, however, a message from Hamet arrived. Hamet proposed a meeting at the house of a sheik in the settlement of Behera. Eaton set out to intercept Hamet. He traveled to first to Rosetta and then to Alexandria. On 22 January 1805 Eaton and 25 others rode into the desert. The next day a large force of Turks blocked the party at Demanhour and refused to let them pass. The source of the difficulty was the French Consul in Alexandria, who was busily raising suspicions about Eaton and his party.⁴⁶

Eaton succeeded in getting a message to Hamet directing him to come to Demanhour, and on 5 February Eaton and Hamet finally met. They headed back to Alexandria, but on the way were arrested by the Turks. Again inspired by the insinuations of the French Consul, the governor of Alexandria refused to let Hamet enter the city. Hamet and his followers--about three hundred in number--therefore encamped at Arab's Tower, thirty miles west of Alexandria. Eaton went into

Alexandria to resume recruitment of mercenaries--although this activity also earned the displeasure of the governor.⁴⁷

On 23 February, Eaton met Hamet at the Arab's Tower, and there they signed a convention that pledged the United States to put Hamet on the throne of Tripoli. In return, Hamet pledged perpetual peace with the United States and its ally, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Hamet promised to reimburse the United States for its expenses in putting him on the throne by turning over Tripoli's annual tribute payments from Sweden. In the convention, Hamet appointed Eaton his "General"--a title Eaton bore forever after.⁴⁸

Captain Hull had offered to convey the Eaton and Hamet's force by sea, but Hamet refused to embark his men on ships. To do so would in any case have been difficult, for the army was too large to travel in the crowded little American warships. Additionally, the force would have had to enter the unfriendly city of Alexandria to board ships. Hamet also rejected a second suggestion, that he and his suite travel by sea while the bulk of the army marched overland. Hamet recognized that without firm leadership, the army would desert long before it reached the rendezvous at Bomba.⁴⁹

Instead, Hamet and Eaton decided to travel by land. Captain Hull agreed to provide logistical support for the march. He promised to bring supplies to Bomba, a settlement on the fringes of Tripolitan territory. Bomba was a day's march from Derne, the first big Tripolitan town the army would reach. The supplies would include food, money, and two field cannons. Eaton gave Hull a report and a copy of the convention with Hamet to forward to Commodore Barron in Malta. Hull departed for Malta on 19 February while Eaton remained in Alexandria to continue recruitment of mercenaries.⁵⁰

Hull left Lieutenant O'Bannon, Midshipman Pascai Peck, and a squad of seven marines with Eaton. While in Alexandria, Eaton and O'Bannon recruited a

company of 28 artillerymen and a company of 40 Greek infantrymen. In addition, Eaton recruited a collection of mostly European adventurers to act as his staff. The staff included Leitensdorfer, George Farquhar, a doctor (not Mendrici), an aide-de-camp, one or more servants, and several others. His former quartermaster, Richard Farquhar, had embezzled or misapplied funds and had been dismissed.⁵¹

Eaton arrived at the Arab's Tower on 5 March. His force now combined with Hamet's, and together they commanded about four hundred men. Hamet's force consisted of his personal suite (officers, bodyguards, and servants) plus about two hundred men under the orders of Sheik Il Taiib and Sheik Mahomet. Hamet had recruited the sheiks at Behera by appealing to their loyalty and by promising them money. The sheiks brought with them a train of 107 camels and a few asses, plus drivers and footmen. Hamet was the nominal leader of the expedition, but the real leader was Eaton (see Figure 1, below).

On 8 March, Eaton and Hamet's army began the march. Tripoli was a thousand miles and Derne five hundred miles away.⁵²

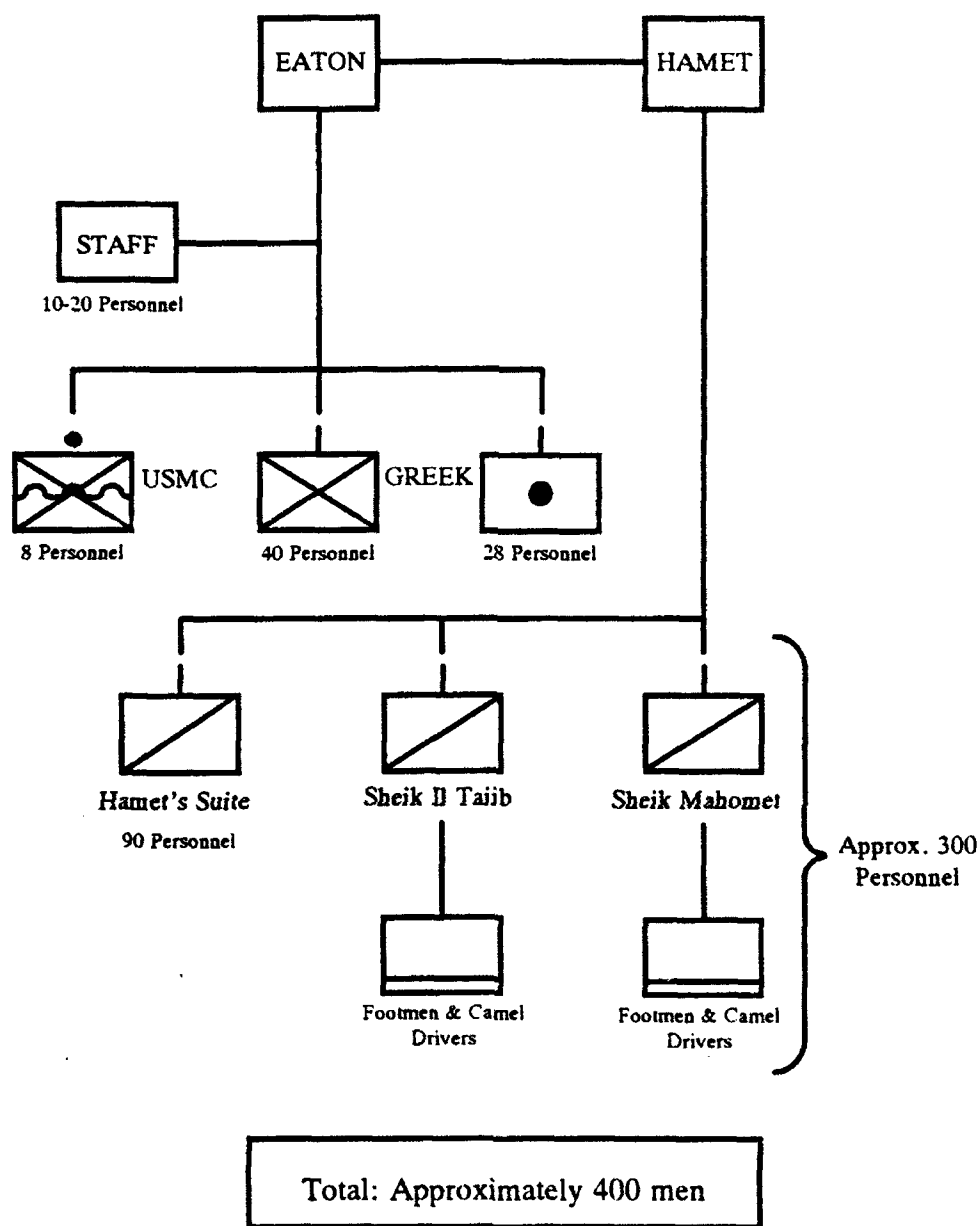


Figure 2.--Eaton and Hamet's Army on 8 March 1805

CHAPTER 5

THE CAPTURE OF DERNE

The March to Derne

Five hundred miles of desert separate Alexandria from Derne. In 1805, no road existed other than the path left by occasional Bedouin caravans as they followed the coast. The landscape was barren and sparsely inhabited. Scattered small settlements existed at some of the few places where water was available. Fortunately for the expedition, March and April are relatively cool months on the North African coast, and although these months often bring vicious windstorms that can raise enough dust and sand to obscure the sun, no such storms occurred during the march to Derne.¹

Eaton, Hamet, and their little army made a good start--fifteen miles the first day, by Eaton's estimate. However, on the second day Eaton encountered a situation that was a preview of things to come. The sheiks (il Taiib and Mahomet) demanded advance pay for the use of their horses and camels. Il Taiib told the camel drivers that if they did not insist on pay in advance, the Christians (Eaton and his marines and mercenaries) would cheat them. Hamet became despondent. Eaton gave the Sheik money to distribute to his men, but the mutiny continued. Eaton then formed up his Christians and made preparations as though to abandon the expedition and return to Alexandria. The Arabs then agreed to continue the march. The next day the march resumed.²

The army covered sixty-five miles in the next three days, by Eaton's estimate (which was probably exaggerated). On 13 March the party received an

encouraging message that claimed the town and province of Derne were rising in rebellion against Yusef. The message would later prove to be false.³

On 18 March the army reached the coastal village of Massouah after a march of nearly two hundred miles. The camel drivers and the sheiks in charge of the caravan refused to go further unless Eaton paid them. Eaton discovered that Hamet had told these men they would be going no further than Massouah. Eaton paid the sheiks all the money he had with him or could borrow from his Christian mercenaries. Even so, more than half the camels headed back toward Egypt when the army broke camp the next morning.

The sheiks declared that a pilgrim traveling to Mecca from Morocco had reported that Yusef had sent a force of eight hundred cavalry to reinforce Derne. Eaton answered that if the rumor was true (and it was close to the truth), it was an argument in favor of acceleration, not delay--better to get to Derne ahead of Yusef's forces.

The sheiks then demanded reassurance that supplies would be available when they reached Bomba. Eaton assured the sheiks that Captain Hull would meet the army at Bomba with supplies, but the sheiks insisted that Eaton send a runner ahead to verify that the supplies were there. Bomba was over two hundred fifty miles away. Eaton refused. Instead, he ordered his Christians to guard the army's supplies and told the sheiks he would not issue rations until the sheiks agreed to continue the march. The sheiks finally gave in. Fifty camels returned, and the march resumed.⁴

Two days later, the army reached another Arab settlement, where supplies were plentiful. Unfortunately, Eaton lacked cash to pay for the supplies and could only barter some rice for produce. Fortunately, the Arabs there prized rice, even to the extent that a woman offered her daughter to Eaton's interpreter in exchange for some.⁵

The army camped for four days, during which time Eaton hired a caravan of ninety camels to carry the army's supplies to Bomba. A group of eighty mounted Bedouin warriors joined the expedition on 23 March. On 25 March a second group joined, consisting of 150 horsemen with their families and belongings. On 26 March, Eaton was ready to move out, but once again the sheiks refused to go. They told Eaton a messenger from Derne had confirmed that Yusef had sent a force of five hundred horsemen and numerous foot soldiers to reinforce Derne. Hamet was terrified, and the sheiks refused to go further. The camel drivers brought from Arab's Tower broke camp and headed east. The sheiks insisted on waiting where they were until a runner could go to Bomba and return with confirmation that the American ships were there.

Eaton determined that il Taiib was instigating the mutiny. He called the man a coward and told him to go back to Egypt and incite no more trouble. Il Taiib left in a rage. Hamet wanted to send an officer to pacify il Taiib and bring him back, but Eaton objected, saying the army would be better off without the troublemaker. Unfortunately, il Taiib persuaded half the army's newly recruited Bedouins to desert with him. Eaton railed against il Taiib's perfidy and threatened to punish him with a rifle and sword. The sheik swore vengeance against Hamet and his Christian masters.

The following morning, Eaton resumed the march without il Taiib. At noon a messenger from il Taiib caught up with the army to tell Eaton and Hamet that il Taiib would rejoin the army if it would wait for him. Hamet agreed to wait. Il Taiib and his followers rejoined the army an hour and a half later, and the march resumed.⁶

The Bedouins who had joined the army on 23-25 March deserted on the 28th, apparently at il Taiib's urging. Hamet sent an officer to persuade them to rejoin. Eaton meanwhile perceived a growing reluctance on the part of Hamet himself to continue the expedition. Eaton believed the reports of Yusef's reinforcements were preying on Hamet's mind. The army remained in camp on the 29th waiting for

Hamet's officer to return with the missing Bedouins. The officer and the missing Bedouins returned that evening.⁷

Eaton had been working on a proclamation to the people of Tripoli, which he now issued. The proclamation described the United States as a country larger than the Ottoman Empire. The country had been beset by enemies, but had united and defeated them all with God's assistance. The United States was at peace with the world for many years afterward. The Americans cultivated the soil, traded with all countries of the world, and prayed to the God of Abraham. Then the traitor Yusef overthrew his brother and made unjust war on the United States. After describing at length what a miscreant Yusef was, the proclamation called on the people of Tripoli to:

Be faithful unto God. Be loyal to the Grand Signor [the Ottoman Sultan, who was also Caliph]. Be loyal to the rightful prince, Hamet Bashaw of Tripoli, and let us not doubt the Almighty will grant us his succor and his assistance to accomplish his wishes. A lasting peace; free and extensive trade, wealth, and fidelity will be the result. God is infinite.⁸

The next day the Christians (who were mostly on foot) resumed the march while Hamet marshaled the Arabs (who were mostly mounted) to follow. After Eaton left the camp, the sheiks fell to squabbling among themselves over apportionment of the money Hamet had paid them to accompany the expedition. Hamet tried to make peace but failed; he then rode after Eaton, whose men had walked fifteen miles by the time Hamet caught them. Eaton turned back and marched three miles to a water source, where the Christians camped. Eaton and Hamet rode back to try to reconcile the sheiks. Once again, il Taiib was behind the trouble, but by now Eaton was aware of il Taiib's special importance: He was a leader of the "*Eu ed alli*" tribe, based around Derne. His support would be important when they reached that region.⁹

Eaton upbraided il Taiib for instigating so much trouble, and he refused to increase il Taiib's rations as il Taiib demanded. Il Taiib stormed off, but later returned and apologized. He reaffirmed his loyalty to Hamet and Eaton and assured Eaton he

would prove his worth at Derne. Hamet meanwhile rode after Sheik Mahomet, who had headed back to Egypt. Hamet returned with Mahomet on 2 April. Eaton at this time calculated he had between six and seven hundred fighting men, plus the camp followers and Bedouin families. Altogether the force numbered about twelve hundred men, women, and children. On 3 April the march resumed.¹⁰

On 5 April, a band of Arabs raided the camp and stole nine of Hamet's horses. Raids such as this were a normal feature of life in the desert. Another feature was long marches without water. On several occasions the army went two days without water. When water was available, it was often fetid. On one occasion the army was obliged to drink from a cistern that had two dead men in it.¹¹

On 9 April, the army stopped at a good source of water. Eaton went to the seacoast to survey the country, and when he returned he discovered Hamet had given orders to pitch camp. Hamet declared that the troops were exhausted and must rest for a day. Eaton soon discovered Hamet's real reason for stopping was so he could send a runner to Bomba to make sure the U.S. Navy was waiting with additional supplies. The army had only six days' supply of rice remaining.

Eaton was furious. He pointed out that the shortage of supplies was a good reason to press onward--the only hope of resupply was at Bomba. Hamet responded that the sheiks were resolved to proceed no further.

Once again, Eaton stopped the Arabs' rations. Hamet ordered the Arabs to pack up and return to Egypt. Eaton feared the Arabs would try to seize the rations, so he drew up his Christians in line of battle. The Arabs and Christians faced each other for an hour. Hamet finally persuaded the Arabs to back down. They dismounted and pitched their tents.

Eaton, thinking the crisis had passed, decided to drill his Christian troops according to their daily practice. The Arabs, however, thought he was preparing to

attack them. They sprang to arms and prepared to charge. The Christians stood their ground. The Arabs hesitated, then withdrew a short distance. Several muskets aimed at Eaton and his officers. Eaton, O'Bannon, Peck, George Farquhar, and the mercenary officers stood firm, but some of the other members of Eaton's staff fled. Some of the Arabs cried "fire!," but Hamet's officers cried out not to, for the Christians were friends. At one point one of the Arabs snapped a pistol at Farquhar, but fortunately it misfired. Eaton later wrote that had the pistol fired it would have gravely injured Farquhar, and a bloody melee would have followed.¹²

Eaton turned his sword and pistols over to O'Bannon and advanced toward the Arabs. A column of muskets was aimed at him. He stopped in front of Hamet and looked him in the eye. Perhaps at this moment he was inspired by Anthony Wayne's staring down of the mutineers at Mount Kemble during the Revolutionary War.

The Arabs surrounded Eaton, and a clamor of voices drowned out his words. O'Bannon and the other Christians watched nervously as Eaton disappeared from their view. O'Bannon was ready to charge but held back, fearing the Arabs would kill Eaton. Instead, a group of Hamet's officers rushed in with drawn sabers and pushed the mutineers back. Hamet's treasurer asked Hamet if he was in his senses. Hamet struck the man with his saber.

The mutineers surged forward again, but Eaton took Hamet by the arm and pulled him away from the crowd. Eaton reproached Hamet for his weakness and asked whether Hamet knew who his real friends were. Hamet broke down and called Eaton his friend and protector. He said he had allowed himself to become too heated, and he apologized. He promised to resume the march. The Arabs returned to their camp and order was restored. Eaton issued rations, and the army was ready to march the next morning.¹³

The next day, 10 April, the army went to half rations, and Eaton recorded that enough rice remained for only three days. In the evening, the Arabs said they would march no further without confirmation of resupplies at Bomba. At 7:00 p.m., Eaton received a report that the Christian artillerymen planned to arm themselves and demand full rations. Eaton quietly dispatched O'Bannon to secure the rations. Half an hour later, however, a courier finally returned from Bomba. The courier reported American ships were in the bay there, awaiting the army. The Arabs turned from gloom to gladness, and nothing more was heard of mutiny.

The army marched only five miles the next day, because Hamet was ill. He recovered in the night, and on 12 April the army covered 25 miles. That evening, the army camped on an eminence that had neither water nor fuel. Eaton issued the last of the rice, but the army had to eat it without cooking. The families that had joined on 23-25 March straggled, too tired and weak to keep up.

The next day, the army traveled only seven and a half miles. Hamet butchered a camel and traded another for sheep to feed the troops. The following day, the army advanced very slowly, with stragglers scattering to gather edible roots and vegetables. In the late afternoon, the army reached Bomba. To Eaton's mortification, there were no ships in the bay and no fresh water on the shore. The Arabs were enraged, but too exhausted to do anything. Eaton and the Christians withdrew up a mountain--probably for self defense as well as for visibility--and lit fires, which they kept burning through the night.¹⁴

The next morning Captain Hull's 16-gun brig *Argus* appeared in the bay. The 10-gun sloop *Hornet* soon arrived as well. The ships brought arms, bread, rice, flour, and money. Hull had stood to sea to avoid a leeward shore at night, but seeing the fires he returned.

Hull had been in the vicinity of Bomba for fifteen days. Upon arrival he had sent shore parties to try to find information about Eaton's force, but the parties learned nothing. Hull had with him Hamet's former prime minister, who acted as a liaison officer. They contacted several Arabs, including messengers from Derne and others who offered to sell beef to provision the army. Hull suspected the latter were spies and sent them away. Hull dispatched messengers to carry letters to Eaton, but the messengers did not find him.¹⁵

Eaton went on board the *Argus* at noon on 17 April and remained on board two days. Meanwhile, the army moved twenty-two miles to the far side of the bay, where fresh water and a suitable landing harbor had been found. The *Hornet* sent supplies ashore, and the army then rested three more days.¹⁶

In addition to supplies, Hull brought letters, including a message from Commodore Barron to Eaton. Barron applauded Eaton's efforts in finding Hamet and getting the expedition started, and he assured Eaton he would continue to support the expedition. Barron also noted that by the time the letter reached Eaton at Bomba, Eaton would have had time to assess the prospects of success. Barron charged Eaton not to turn the supplies and money over to Hamet if Eaton had encountered "unexpected difficulties that place the chances of success on...precarious grounds."

"Tread with the utmost circumspection," Barron continued. He did not want to dampen Eaton's ardor, but some things Eaton had reported from Egypt, "when applied to the test of my instructions from home give birth to feelings of doubt and uneasiness." Referring to Eaton's convention with Hamet, Barron wrote:

You must be sensible, Sir, that in giving their cooperation with the exiled Bashaw, Government did not contemplate the measure as leading necessarily and absolutely to a reinstatement of that Prince in his rights on the regency of Tripoli....I fear that by the convention you were about to enter into with Hamet and by the complexion of other measures that a wider range may have been taken than is consistent with the powers invested in me....it is my duty to state explicitly that I must withhold my sanction to

any convention or agreement committing the United States or tending to impress upon Hamet Bashaw a conviction that *we have bound ourselves to place him on the Throne.*

Barron added that if the U.S. representative (Tobias Lear) negotiated a peace with Yusef, the United States would necessarily withdraw its support from Hamet. However, he went on, "You will not conclude that these considerations...ought to induce us to abandon the benefits which the measures you have adopted seem to promise." He promised continued support as long as Eaton's expedition served American interests, but he refused a request from Eaton for one hundred additional marines. He wrote that he was short of men and could not detach anyone once the navy resumed bombardments of Tripoli in the late spring.¹⁷

Barron concluded by acknowledging that he could not tie Eaton down with positive instructions, for he could not foresee the circumstances that might develop. He left Eaton to exercise his best judgment.

What should Eaton do? Should he continue the operation? Another man might have concluded that six mutinies on the march from Alexandria constituted "unexpected difficulties that place the chances of success on...precarious grounds." Eaton did not relay Barron's reservations to Hamet, nor even mention them in his journal. He postponed the question of whether he ought to continue the operation until after he knew the results of the assault on Derne. This study will do likewise.

The Assault on Derne

On 21 April, Eaton and Hull began plans to capture Derne. Eaton noted that Barron had promised to send the 38 gun frigate *Congress*, which had failed to appear. The *Congress* was supposed to bring the two field pieces Eaton had requested. Eaton asked Hull to provide two 24-pound carronades instead, although he noted the heavy naval guns "may answer our purpose in advancing [but] they would be dead weight in a retrograde movement." Eaton also asked to retain the services of O'Bannon

and his marines, as well as Midshipman Mann. To support the assault on Derne, Eaton asked Hull "to bring the Guns of your detachment to bear on the Enemys Batteries; which being badly built; of bad materials, will not long be able to resist you."¹⁸

Hull allowed Eaton to keep the marines and Midshipman Mann. He also agreed on signals for communicating between his ships and Eaton on the shore. Possibly Mann served as Eaton's signal officer, although the record does not say.¹⁹

On 23 April the army resumed its march. At the end of the day the army was approaching cultivated land. Hamet sent a crier through the camp to warn the troops against pillaging. The army was entering the territory of Tripoli, which Hamet meant to rule. The next day, the army marched fifteen miles. That evening, however, a messenger arrived bearing news that the governor of Derne had fortified the town. The messenger added that Yusef's reinforcements were near and could reach Derne ahead of Eaton and Hamet's force. Hamet and the sheiks became frightened and held a late night council of war to which Eaton was not invited. In the morning they refused to advance. Sheiks il Taiib and Mahomet mounted their forces and prepared to head back to Egypt.

Eaton argued with the Arab leaders all morning, and by offering them a bribe of two thousand dollars he persuaded them to continue toward Derne. A few hours later, the army camped on high ground overlooking the town.

Eaton observed that the defenses of the town consisted of a water battery of 8 nine-pounders, a temporary breastwork and walls of old buildings facing the northeast, and a row of fortified houses along the bay southeast of the town. The fortified houses had loopholes cut in the walls for muskets.

In the evening, a few sheiks from the town came into the camp. They told Hamet that the western two-thirds of the town supported him, but the governor had eight hundred men, the batteries, and the breastworks, so storming the town would be

difficult. Furthermore, Yusef's reinforcements were close at hand. The sheiks may have brought reinforcements, or Hamet may have acquired men from the vicinity of Bomba, for by Eaton's account Hamet now commanded about two thousand fighting men.²⁰

In the morning, Eaton sent a message to the governor of Derne. Eaton declared Hamet to be the legitimate sovereign of Tripoli, and he urged the governor to grant Hamet free passage though the city:

Let no differences of religion induce us to shed the blood of harmless men who think little and know nothing....Hamet Bashaw pledges himself to me that you shall be established in your government. -- I shall see you to morrow in a way of your choice.

The governor, Mustifa Bey, sent a reply at once: "My head or yours."²¹

After sending his message to Mustifa, Eaton made smoke signals to attract Hull's ships, and at 2:00 p.m. the *U.S.S. Nautilus* appeared. Eaton and the *Nautilus* exchanged signals, and at 6:00 p.m., Eaton spoke with the captain, John H. Dent. Eaton told Dent he planned to attack Derne in the morning, if Hull could bring up the other ships.²²

Eaton was pleased to learn that *Nautilus* brought the two field pieces Eaton wanted. Commodore Barron had received information that the waters off Derne were shallow, so he substituted the little 12-gun schooner *Nautilus* for the deeper drafted (and heavier gunned) *Congress*. Probably he had in mind *Philadelphia's* misadventure, which he did not want *Congress* to repeat. When *Nautilus* arrived off Bomba, Hull had passed the signals he and Eaton had agreed upon and he instructed Dent to contact Eaton and deliver the field pieces.²³

Dent assured Eaton the *Nautilus* would provide all the support from the sea it was capable of. He also promised to land the two field pieces in the morning,

although he noted Eaton's men might have some difficulty getting the guns up the steep slopes from the beach.²⁴

Early the following morning, 27 April, *Argus* and *Hornet* hove into sight off Derne. Dent and the *Nautilus* landed one of the field pieces as promised, but only with great difficulty. Eaton's men had to haul the piece up a twenty foot perpendicular rock to get it off the boat. Having found it exceedingly difficult to get the first piece ashore, Eaton told Dent to keep the second one. Eaton mounted the one field piece and advanced on the town.

Hull, meanwhile, sent Lieutenant Samuel Evans of the *Hornet* close to the shore to support the army should the enemy attack while Eaton was busy with landing the field piece. The enemy had made several appearances outside the town, but did not attack.

A little before 2:00 p.m., Eaton began the attack. Eaton and the marines and mercenaries attacked Derne from the southeast, while Hamet and the Arabs moved south of the town and prepared to attack from the southwest. The navy took positions in the bay to support the attack. Evans anchored the *Hornet* within one hundred yards of Derne's battery of eight guns and commenced a heavy fire on the battery. *Hornet* had springs on its cables--lines attached to its anchor cable that allowed Evans to swing the ship around to present both broadsides to the enemy battery or to shift his broadsides to engage a different target. *Nautilus* took station east of the *Hornet*, half a mile from the shore, and *Argus* anchored a little beyond *Nautilus*. *Argus* and *Nautilus* began to fire on the battery and the town.²⁵

Derne's battery kept up a heavy fire for nearly an hour, apparently without doing much damage. Commodore Preble in his attacks on Tripoli noted the Tripolitan gunners were atrocious shots, and apparently the gunners at Derne were no better. In contrast, well-aimed shots from the American ships flew all around the battery. At

such close range, even *Hornet's* little 9-pounders could inflict serious damage on the harbor fortifications. Fire from the battery began to slacken, and after an hour the gun crews abandoned their post. They moved to the fortified houses in the southeast, opposite Eaton's force.

Eaton and the enemy in the fortified houses along the bay had now been engaged in a general firefight for about an hour. Eaton's field piece provided effective fire at first, but in the excitement of the battle the gunners shot away the rammer. The enemy's fire increased with the arrival of additional troops, and Eaton's force felt itself

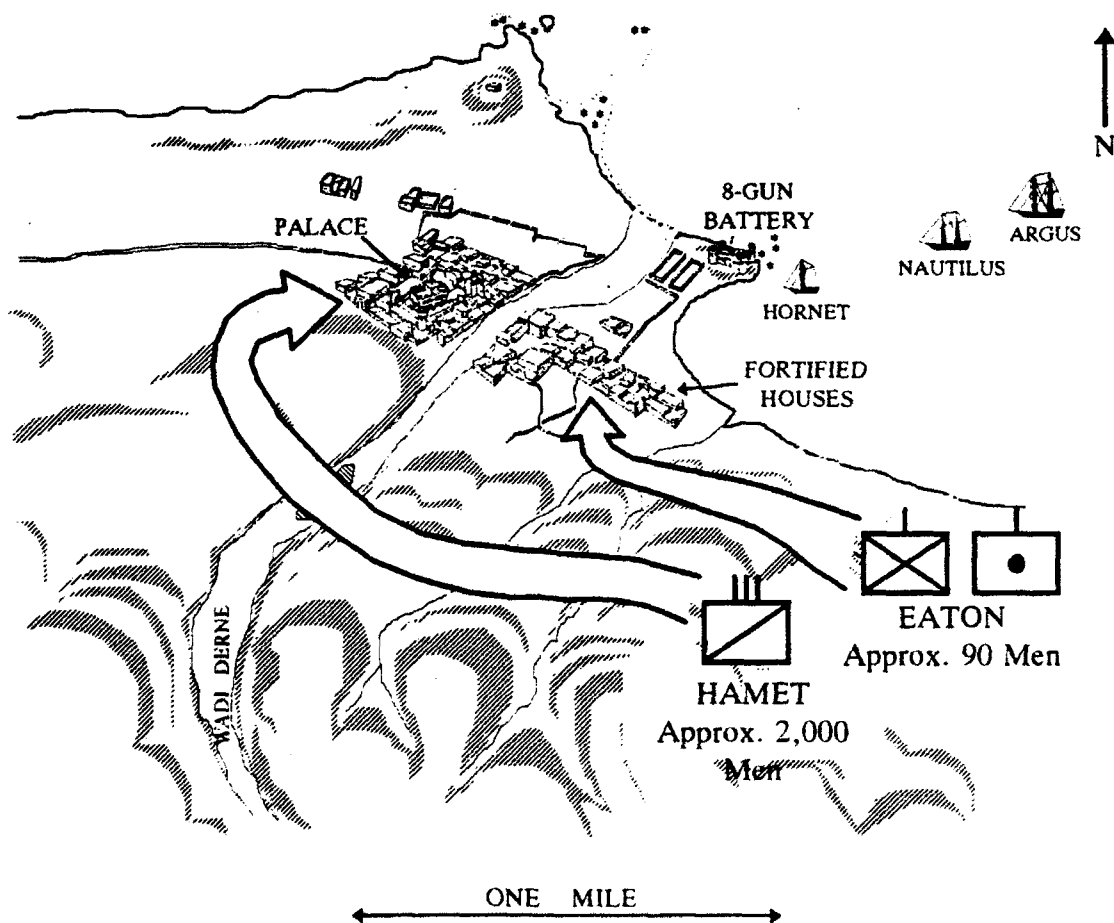


Figure 3.--The assault on Derne

both outnumbered and outgunned--according to Eaton, the enemy outnumbered his force ten to one. Eaton, however, had not come all the way from Egypt to retreat. He ordered a charge and led the Christians forward in a desperate rush. The enemy fell back in disorder, some of them stopping to fire from behind palm trees and walls. Eaton received a musketball through his wrist, but he continued forward. O'Bannon, who was gung-ho before the Marine Corps knew the word, now led the attack.

The navy now began to fire on the enemy in front of Eaton to clear the way as he advanced. Evans in the *Hornet* was well positioned to support Eaton with close-in fires. By swinging on his cables he could bring his guns to bear on the retreating enemy, and he was close enough to clearly mark Eaton's progress to avoid firing on Eaton's force. The enemy that hid behind houses to protect themselves from Eaton's fire exposed their backs to the *Hornet*. *Hornet's* fire had good effect, but at some point her planksheers gave way, disabling her guns on one side of the ship. *Hornet*, a converted merchant vessel, was not constructed to carry guns.²⁶

Pressed between the navy's fires and Eaton's bayonets, the enemy retreated to the battery. O'Bannon and Eaton pursued. The enemy had time to load one of the guns in the battery, but then fled; when O'Bannon reached the battery his men turned the gun around and fired on the retreating enemy. O'Bannon raised an American flag over the battery--the first raising of the Stars and Stripes over an Old World fort. The navy, which had momentarily held its fire as O'Bannon stormed the battery, now shifted to the houses in which the enemy had hidden.

The enemy withdrew further, but found themselves outflanked by Hamet's cavalry. Hamet had waited outside the town until Eaton seemed to be making progress; he then entered the town in the southwest, where the inhabitants were friendly to him. While Mustifa's forces fixed their attention on Eaton and the navy, Hamet captured the governor's palace and advanced into the town. He caught the

enemy force fleeing from the battery and rode it down. By 4:00 p.m. the town was secured. Mustifa took refuge in a mosque and then in a harem.

Eaton's force lost one marine killed and thirteen men wounded, of whom one marine later died. Hamet's and the enemy's losses are not recorded. Immediately upon securing the town, Eaton established his headquarters in the battery. He set about establishing defenses, lest Yusef's reinforcements appear or his adherents in the town start a counterrevolution. Hull sent boats ashore to collect the casualties. At 5:30 p.m., Eaton went aboard the *Argus* to have his wound dressed.²⁷

Eaton wrote a report for Commodore Barron describing the capture of Derne. He also now answered the dispatch from Barron that he had received at Bomba. Barron, he felt, was vacillating in his support of Hamet and seemed too pessimistic about the expedition's chances of success. Eaton believed the expedition not only would succeed, but would do so at less cost than any other measure could offer. Barron should not become parsimonious in his support for the expedition.

When the government agreed to use Hamet as an instrument against his brother, Eaton wrote, it was understood the project would require adequate provisions. The secretary of the navy had told Eaton the government would provide arms, ammunition, and fifty thousand dollars to support the expedition. The twenty thousand dollars deposited with Tobias Lear were merely startup money. No one could imagine that sum to be sufficient for the whole effort. Already, Eaton had spent thirty thousand dollars. He considered it a good investment, but he would need more cash yet. Cash would buy off the inhabitants of the country; even those who would not agree to fight could be kept neutral.

Eaton wanted regular troops also. Where cash could not win over a town, "cannon balls and bayonets come in as irresistible Agents." Eaton acknowledged that Hamet and his forces lacked backbone. He pointed out, however, that Yusef's forces

were no better; either side could benefit by a little stiffening from regular forces.

Eaton had in mind the hundred marines Barron had earlier denied him.

Eaton noted that in Egypt Hamet was destitute of means to mount a military expedition into Tripoli. It was true, as Barron had said, that Hamet could not carry out the expedition without American aid. Now that Hamet was in possession of Derne, the situation was little changed. Every part of the Regency of Tripoli was wasted by famine and drought, and the people had little means or motivation to exert themselves on Hamet's behalf. That Hamet lacked the means on his own to mount a military challenge to Yusef did not mean he was unworthy of American aid, however. The miserable condition of the country meant Yusef likewise could raise little support; in such circumstances, a small American investment of money and troops could readily shift the balance in Hamet's favor.

Eaton warned that as soon as Yusef perceived a threat from Hamet he would offer peace with the United States. If this happened and the United States made peace with Yusef, then the United States must necessarily withdraw its support from Hamet. Hamet and his followers would then be in much worse condition than before the United States became their ally. The honor of the government therefore required that any peace agreement must at least leave Hamet in as good a position as that from which he began, out of the reach of a vindictive enemy. Better yet, Eaton continued: give Hamet America's full support. By toppling Yusef, the United States would not only free itself from annoyance by Tripoli, but would give all the Barbary Powers notice that their system of piracy was at an end.

Finally, Eaton claimed that his convention with Hamet did not irrevocably commit the United States to restoring Hamet to power, as the second article caveats the promise by including the phrase "so long as comports with [the United States'] own honor and interest."

Eaton then affixed his account of the capture of Derne, which he believed showed that the expedition's chances of success were not on "precarious grounds." He expected to be able to continue the march to Tripoli.²⁸

First, however, he had to defend Derne, for a large force loyal to Yusef was fourteen hours away.²⁹

The Defense of Derne

After capturing the Derne, Eaton established Hamet as the civil ruler while Eaton himself remained commander in chief of the military forces. Hull remained at Derne with the *Argus* and *Nautilus*, while *Hornet* returned to Malta to report the capture of Derne and to undergo repairs.³⁰

The day after Derne fell, Yusef's reinforcements arrived. Contrary to Eaton's expectations, the reinforcements did not scatter upon learning they had arrived too late. Instead, they encamped outside the town and prepared to attack. Their commander, Hassan Bey, resembled his counterpart Eaton in his refusal to give up.

Mustifa remained in a harem in the town. Eaton felt annoyed, but the Arabs considered the harem an inviolable sanctuary. From the harem, Mustifa fed information and encouragement to Yusef's forces outside the town. Eaton finally resolved to attack the harem with his Christian troops, and on 5 May he marched through the town to the harem. Hamet stopped him and explained that if Eaton violated the sanctuary of the harem it would reflect badly on Hamet and his cause. Eaton agreed to wait one more day, and during the night Mustifa escaped the town.³¹

Hassan's forces attacked Derne early the next morning. They attacked a detachment of Hamet's cavalry posted a mile outside the town and defeated it. Hamet's cavalry retreated, and the enemy pursued it into the town. Fire from the *Argus* and the *Nautilus* inflicted casualties on the advancing enemy, but did not turn

them back. Eaton felt his Christians were too few for a sortie from the battery, so instead he turned his guns toward the town and engaged the enemy by fire. A lucky shot decapitated two enemy horsemen, and the rest fled. Hamet's cavalry pursued and inflicted heavy losses. The enemy lost twenty-eight killed and fifty-six wounded; Hamet lost twelve to fourteen men.

The enemy retreated to their camp, around which they established a low parapet. Deserters reported the enemy was demoralized, and some of the Arabs the enemy had recruited on their march to Derne were now rebelling. Eaton wanted to seize the opportunity to counterattack, but Hamet refused.³²

Hassan's forces remained outside the town for three weeks, occasionally appearing as if about to attack, then withdrawing. Deserters reported the Arabs were terrified of Eaton's battery and the naval guns. Hassan's Tripolitan cavalry remained resolute, but their allies--Bedouins recruited on the march to Derne--began to disappear. Many deserted to Hamet.

On 28 May, about fifty of Hassan's infantry raided the Bedouins' sheep herds on the outskirts of Derne. Hamet's men counterattacked and drove the enemy back. Eaton and O'Bannon gathered a party of about forty Christians and moved up a ravine, unobserved by the retreating enemy. At the top they ambushed the enemy. After a volley of musket fire, Eaton's force charged with fixed bayonets, killing several of the enemy and causing the rest to abandon their arms and flee. The Bedouins complained that the Americans fought unfairly, firing big cannonballs that could carry away a man and his horse and charging them with bayonets without giving the Bedouins time to reload their muskets.

Despite such setbacks, Hassan did not quit. Instead, he attempted a different tactic: he offered six thousand dollars for Eaton's head, and double the sum for Eaton as a prisoner.³³

Hassan advanced for another attack on 2 June, but the Bedouins refused to participate. Hassan then tried to force the Bedouins to attack by holding their families hostage. The concept was not original; Hassan's own family was being held hostage by Yusef in Tripoli. So, for that matter, was Hamet's. The Bedouins joined the Tripolitan cavalry in an assault on 2 June, but they did not fight resolutely. The attack failed, and Hamet and Eaton pursued the enemy into the hills.³⁴

Hassan received reinforcements shortly after the 2 June attack. His force numbered over three thousand men. Hamet's forces were swelled by Bedouins, including deserters from Hassan's force, and now numbered well over two thousand men. However, neither Hamet nor Eaton put much faith in the Bedouins.³⁵

Hassan attacked again on 10 June. Hamet's forces successfully resisted his attempts to enter the town, while Eaton supported with his field piece. The *Argus* and *Hornet* (which had returned from Malta) fired at close range, inflicting heavy losses against enemy forces advancing along the beach east of the town. The enemy withdrew into the hills, where *Hornet's* guns and *Argus's* 24-pound carronades could not elevate high enough to reach them. *Argus* therefore stood off a distance and engaged the enemy with her long 12-pounders. Hassan's forces broke and fled. Hamet pursued, inflicting heavy casualties. In this engagement, Hamet suffered fifty to sixty casualties; Hassan suffered about twice that number, and his forces were thoroughly demoralized.³⁶

That afternoon, the 38-gun frigate *Constellation* arrived in the bay. Its appearance persuaded Hassan's remaining forces that further struggle was pointless. Hassan's Bedouins and Arab militias deserted. Hassan and his Tripolitan cavalry withdrew to the west.

Constellation, however, did not bring the reinforcements Hassan's forces feared. Instead, *Constellation* brought news that Tobias Lear had negotiated peace with

Yusef Caramanli. For Eaton, the news was disappointing, but not unexpected. Barron had informed him in a letter dated 19 May that Lear was engaged in promising negotiations. That letter arrived with the *Hornet* on 30 May. On 11 June Eaton received orders from the new commodore of the Mediterranean Squadron, John Rodgers, to evacuate Derne.³⁷

The Evacuation of Derne

The order to evacuate Derne cannot have come as a complete surprise to Eaton. Several days earlier he had received a letter from Commodore Barron informing him that peace negotiations had begun and that any peace must entail an end to American support for Hamet. In any case, Barron would provide no more money or supplies to support the expedition. If Hamet lacked the talent and means to operate without American support, then he was not worthy of such support. The U.S. squadron would continue to cooperate in military operations with Hamet, as long as the war continued, but it would not supply Hamet with provisions or money.

Barron added that the course he and his comrades should follow should be plain enough. Apparently Barron meant that Eaton should evacuate Derne, leaving Hamet to continue on his own. Hull, Rodgers, and Lear received copies of Barron's letter and interpreted it thus. Eaton did not, or at least he did not act accordingly.³⁸

On 22 May, a few days after Barron dictated the letter to Eaton (Barron himself being too ill to write anything himself), Barron finally acknowledged he was too ill to command the Mediterranean Squadron. He therefore turned command over to Commodore Rodgers. Barron informed Tobias Lear of his intention on 18 May. Lear by then was preparing to sail to Tripoli, where Yusef Caramanli was showing signs of willingness to negotiate peace.

In March 1805, Captain William Bainbridge (formerly of the *Philadelphia*, and now a prisoner in Tripoli) wrote to Commodore Barron that Yusef seemed receptive to peace negotiations. Yusef's foreign minister had intimated that the Americans could buy peace for \$150,000.³⁹

A month later, Bainbridge wrote to inform Barron that Yusef had heard the Americans were working with Hamet. Yusef said that as long as the war was between Tripoli and the Americans, it was a "war of interest that might easily be brought to a conclusion by lesser or greater sacrifice upon one side or the other." However, if the Americans were working with Hamet then it was a war directed against Yusef's personal safety. In that case, Yusef would retaliate by acting to hurt the prisoners--Bainbridge and the rest of *Philadelphia's* crew.⁴⁰

Lear saw Yusef's threat as a good reason to negotiate peace. Barron's imminent departure was another good reason. Barron had been telling Lear that the fleet was in poor condition and that by autumn many of the large frigates would have to return to the United States for overhauls. Thomas Jefferson had already declared that if the war were not over by fall, he would recall the squadron, leaving only two frigates and one or two support vessels to maintain the blockade. Jefferson wrote that such a force would be adequate to protect American commerce while being cheaper than tribute payments.⁴¹

Captain Rodgers, who was able to inspect the squadron personally and who had no debilitating illness to cause him to long for home, saw things differently. He knew that, on the advice of Captain Preble, the United States was sending a fleet of gunboats to reinforce the squadron. By mid-June Rodgers expected to appear off Tripoli with a squadron much larger than Preble had commanded.

Rodgers was anxious to fight. He told Lear that the officers of the squadron would happily scrape together \$200,000 to ransom *Philadelphia's* crew, if the

war could then continue. With *Philadelphia's* crew out of danger, the navy need have no reservations about an all-out attack on Tripoli. Even with *Philadelphia's* crew in captivity, Rodgers believed he could bombard Tripoli and force Yusef to sue for peace on American terms.⁴²

Rodgers also had more faith in Eaton's expedition than did Barron or Lear. Lear knew that if he waited much longer, Rodgers would take command and a negotiated peace might become more difficult to achieve.

Yusef did not make Lear wait. When Yusef had learned of the fall of Derne on 21 May, he was stunned. The war was now going badly for him. Captain Rodgers had tightened the blockade of Tripoli, and food was short. The American squadron would soon resume the bombardments it had broken off with the onset of the winter. Now Hamet was in Derne at the head of a victorious army. Yusef decided to try to end the war as quickly as possible.

Negotiations began in mid-May. At first, Yusef's representative demanded payment of \$200,000 in exchange for peace and release of the crew of the *Philadelphia*. Lear rejected the demand. On 30 May Yusef suddenly reduced his price to \$60,000. Lear accepted, and a treaty was signed on 4 June.

The treaty pledged Tripoli to release the crew of the *Philadelphia* and cease attacks on American ships. In return, the United States promised to pay \$60,000 and withdraw its support from Hamet. Yusef also agreed to release Hamet's family, whom he held as hostages in Tripoli. These were the terms communicated to Eaton at Derne on 11 June.⁴³

Eaton informed Hamet of the peace agreement. Hamet responded with resignation. He had suspected for some time that the Americans would withdraw their support before he reached Tripoli. Hamet appears to have given little consideration to the possibility of continuing without Eaton and American support. Without American

cash to pay his troops and without the steel of Eaton's marines and mercenaries, he knew he would get nowhere. He agreed to evacuate Derne with Eaton's force. Hamet warned Eaton that he should not let word of the evacuation escape. The Americans would evacuate the Christian troops, but of the Muslims, the Americans would evacuate only Hamet and a few of his followers. Hamet feared that once the rest of the Arabs learned of the evacuation, they would riot.

Eaton therefore began preparations for a counteroffensive to pursue the remnants of Hassan's forces west of Derne, in order to conceal his real intention. At 8:00 p.m. on 12 June, Eaton sent his Christian mercenaries aboard the *Constellation*. The marines remained at their guardposts. After the mercenaries were aboard, *Constellation's* boats returned, and Eaton called Hamet and his retinue to the beach. Hamet, his forty followers, and the marines left the beach. Eaton departed last in a small boat he had retained for the purpose. As he shoved off, Hamet's abandoned followers appeared on the shore and at the battery. They called after Eaton and Hamet and bewailed the betrayal. Some of the Arabs seized Eaton's tents and horses and carried them away in preparation for flight into the desert.

On the *Constellation* was one of Yusef's officials who carried an amnesty for Hamet's followers. He went ashore to assure the people in Derne that Yusef would not retaliate against them. Many of the people did not believe the official; they abandoned the town in the morning. Hassan's forces were still fleeing to the west, and they did not stop or return to occupy Derne for a few days. In July, Yusef sent a force of eight hundred soldiers to Derne to suppress disloyal elements and to exact reparations from the inhabitants.⁴⁴

Eaton and Hamet, meanwhile, sailed to Syracuse aboard the *Constellation*. Upon arriving in Syracuse, Hamet went into exile and Eaton prepared to sail home. Eaton tarried in the Mediterranean long enough to serve as recorder in a court of

inquiry concerning Captain Bainbridge's loss of the *Philadelphia*. He then took passage home on the *U.S.S. Franklin*.⁴⁵

CHAPTER 6

DID THE UNITED STATES END THE WAR TOO SOON?

"Treason Against the Character of the Nation"

When William Eaton first departed Derne on the *Constellation*, he wrote to a friend that the peace settlement was more favorable than any obtained by a Christian nation with a Barbary regency in a hundred years. He also wrote that the treaty was honorable. Later, as he reflected on the results of his campaign, he came to believe the treaty was "treason against the character of the nation."¹

Eaton undoubtedly felt an emotional letdown. He had struggled for years to set up the combined operation with Hamet. He had expended tremendous energy and strength of will in leading his army across the desert to capture Derne. His efforts seemed now to have been almost wasted. Perhaps Eaton also felt guilty for not having fulfilled the promises he had made to Hamet at the Arab's Tower in February 1805. He had promised Hamet a kingdom, but instead Hamet was an impoverished exile in Syracuse. Hamet's family had not been restored to him as the peace treaty required, and Eaton suspected that Lear had negotiated a secret clause to the treaty that allowed Yusef to postpone the return of Hamet's family.²

Never one to blame himself, Eaton vented his frustration on Lear. He concluded that he could have marched to Tripoli and placed Hamet on the throne, to the enormous advantage of the United States, but for the perfidious Lear. Eaton probably heard American naval officers saying much the same thing to him while he

was a Syracuse. The men of the Mediterranean squadron had wanted to fight and were disappointed not to get the chance. Furthermore, the squadron felt a general dislike of Lear, whom they believed had usurped undue control over naval operations.³

When he left the Mediterranean, Eaton carried a letter from Hamet to President Jefferson. The letter expressed gratitude to the United States and particularly to Eaton and O'Bannon for supporting Hamet's attempt to regain the throne of Tripoli. Hamet noted that it was God's will that the expedition should fail, and he accepted this. All Hamet wanted was a stipend to live on and to see his family again. He appealed to Jefferson for relief:

I therefore fling myself on the mercy of your excellency, who, under the influence of just laws, will not fail to render me that justice which oppression and misfortune entitle me to.⁴

Eaton used this letter as the basis for a campaign to show that Lear had betrayed American interests. Eaton charged that Lear had concluded peace too early. Had Lear allowed Eaton to continue the land campaign and Rodgers to continue the sea campaign, the United States could have achieved a more favorable peace.⁵

Eaton contended that a fraction of the \$60,000 paid to Yusef would have maintained Hamet's army and allowed Eaton and Hamet to march to Tripoli. Assisted by the navy's bombardment of the town, Eaton and Hamet could have captured Tripoli and established a government friendly to the United States. This result would have been made even more certain by the participation of the Mediterranean Squadron's marines in the land attack. Eaton added that the United States would actually have saved money by backing Hamet, since Hamet had promised to reimburse the United States for the expenses of the campaign.

Eaton declared that the United States lost a great opportunity when it made a premature peace with Tripoli. A decisive victory in the Tripolitan War would have persuaded the other Barbary States to moderate their demands on the United States.

Instead, Tobias Lear negotiated a treaty that compromised America's honor and reputation and demonstrated that the Americans were unreliable as allies and irresolute as enemies.⁶

On 30 December 1805, the Senate began consideration of the treaty with Tripoli. The Federalists in the Senate were delighted to have the opportunity Eaton's accusations offered to embarrass President Jefferson. The Senate asked Jefferson to provide all correspondence related to the war. Jefferson complied, and with the documents he sent a message explaining his reasoning behind the decision to use Hamet in the war against Yusef. "We considered that concerted operations by those who have a common enemy were entirely justifiable, and might produce effects favorable to both, without binding either to guaranty the objects of the other." Jefferson explained that it was never the intention of the United States to place Hamet on the throne of Tripoli. If Hamet thought otherwise, he was mistaken. However, Jefferson continued, the United States ought to foster a reputation for liberality and justice, and in that spirit the Senate should consider favorably Hamet's request for relief.⁷

The Senate appointed a committee to consider Hamet's request for relief, which would have great bearing on the ratification of the treaty. Senator Stephen Bradley, an old friend of Eaton's, but also a Republican, chaired the committee. The committee read the correspondence submitted by Jefferson and heard interesting testimony from a number of sources. Captain Dent, formerly of the *Nautilus*, testified that Lear had opposed the land expedition all along. Furthermore, Dent declared, the officers in the squadron generally believed Lear had gained a malign influence over the incapacitated Commodore Barron.⁸

A former member of *Philadelphia's* crew, marine Lieutenant Wallace W. Wormeley, testified that the people of Tripoli were near revolt because of the deprivations inflicted by the American blockade. When word of the fall of Derne

reached Tripoli, Yusef was near panic. He could not raise taxes to pay for an army. Eaton could have taken Tripoli without firing a shot. As for any concerns that Yusef might have harmed *Philadelphia's* crew had the war continued, Wormeley testified that the crew felt no such apprehensions. Commodore Rodgers wrote in his correspondence that he, too, believed the prisoners were never in danger.⁹

On 17 March 1806, the committee issued its report. It concluded that Hamet "without the hazard of a repulse, would have marched to the throne of Tripoli, had he been supported by the co-operation of the American squadron, which in honor and good faith he had a right to expect."

...it was in the power of the United States, with the force then employed and a small portion of the sixty thousand dollars, thus improperly expended, to have placed Hamet Caramalli, the rightful sovereign of Tripoli, on his throne; to have obtained their prisoners in perfect safety, without the payment of a cent, with assurance, and probable certainty, of eventual remuneration for all expense; and to have established a peace with the Barbary powers, that would have been secure and permanent, and which would have dignified the name and character of the American people.

The report praised Eaton and O'Bannon for their contributions to the effort and excused Commodore Barron from blame because of his illness. The committee strongly criticized Lear for improperly interfering with Eaton's operation, for paying ransom to Yusef, and for causing Eaton and Hamet to evacuate Derne.¹⁰ The committee recommended the United States provide money to relieve Hamet, and the Senate subsequently approved a bill for Hamet's relief. On 12 April 1806 the Senate ratified the peace treaty by a vote of 21-8.¹¹

A year and a half later, Yusef was still holding Hamet's family in Tripoli. In June 1807, when U.S. Consul to Tripoli George Davis formally requested that Yusef release the family, Yusef's foreign minister showed Davis the secret article. Davis reported his discovery to Madison.¹² President Jefferson forwarded Davis's letter to the Senate in November 1807 and claimed that this was the first knowledge he had

obtained of the secret clause. The Senate, of course, was outraged, but it was too late to do anything about the clause; by this time Davis had secured the release of Hamet's wife and family and had shipped them to Syracuse.¹³

American popular history continues to portray Lear as a villain for his actions in 1805 and accepts that Eaton could have marched to Tripoli. Many historians have lamented that Rodgers was not allowed to send his strong squadron against Tripoli. Like Eaton, Rodgers believed he could have compelled Yusef to make peace on American terms. A careful examination of what the land and sea campaigns would have entailed reveals that neither undertaking would have been guaranteed success.

What if Rodgers Had Sailed Against Tripoli?

Had Lear failed to negotiate peace in June 1805, the war would have continued through the summer. Lear would probably have found that he lacked the influence with Commodore Rodgers that he enjoyed with Commodore Barron. Rodgers, not Lear, would have become the guiding force in American conduct of the Tripolitan War. Rodgers appeared more confident than Lear in the probability of success of Eaton's expedition. Rodgers would probably have given Eaton some funds and continued logistical support. He might have provided additional marines, although he would thereby have gone against advice from Barron and Lear.

Rodgers was especially eager to resume the naval bombardment of Tripoli. According to the instructions of the Secretary of the Navy, Rodgers was to wait until the beginning of July to begin bombarding Tripoli. By then ten new gunboats were to arrive from America. The gunboats--eight only¹⁴--reached Syracuse on 7-9 July 1805.¹⁵ Once the new gunboats arrived, Rodgers could have begun action against Tripoli. He would then have commanded a force substantially greater than that with which Commodore Preble had engaged the Tripolitans in 1804. Preble had thirteen

vessels carrying 106 guns and two mortars. Rodgers would have had twenty-nine vessels carrying 272 guns and two mortars (See Table 1, below). If the war had not ended, Rodgers might also have retained the *President* (44 guns), instead of allowing it to return Commodore Barron to the United States in July.¹⁶

The Bey of Tunis was threatening war over the American seizure of Tunisian ships that attempted to run the blockade of Tripoli. To ensure that Tunis behaved, Rodgers would probably have held back a portion of his force--a brig or one

TABLE 1
THE MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON, JULY 1805

<u>Frigates:</u>	<u>Guns:</u>
<i>Constitution</i>	44
<i>Constellation</i>	38
<i>Congress</i>	38
<i>Essex</i>	32
<i>John Adams</i>	28
<u>Brigs:</u>	<u>Guns:</u>
<i>Siren</i>	16
<i>Argus</i>	16
<i>Franklin</i>	8
<u>Schooners:</u>	<u>Guns:</u>
<i>Vixen</i>	12
<i>Nautilus</i>	12
<i>Enterprise</i>	12
<u>Sloop:</u>	<u>Guns:</u>
<i>Hornet</i>	10
<u>Bomb Ketches:</u>	<u>Guns:</u>
<i>Spitfire</i>	One 13" Mortar
<i>Vengeance</i>	One 13" Mortar
<u>Gunboats:</u>	<u>Guns:</u>
8 U.S. Gunboats	8
6 Gunboats purchased at Acona	8
2 Tripolitan Gunboats Captured in 1804	2

of the smaller frigates--to cruise off the Tunisian coast. Additionally, if Rodgers chose to support Eaton's expedition, he would have had to detach vessels to carry messages and supplies.¹⁷

Rodgers would have faced essentially the same Tripolitan shore batteries and gunboats Preble had engaged the previous fall. Preble originally faced twenty-four vessels and destroyed or captured six. During the winter of 1804-1805, the Tripolitans built at least one new gunboat (constructed by Peter West, a *Philadelphia* sailor who had "turned Turk").¹⁸ However, the new Tripolitan vessel(s) did not make up their losses. When Rodgers sailed the *Constitution* outside Tripoli harbor in March 1805, he counted 17 or 18 vessels in the harbor, including a brig, a schooner, two galleys, and several gunboats. Two Tripolitan cruisers were then known to be sailing in the western Mediterranean.¹⁹

In August 1804, Preble estimated the Tripolitan harbor batteries had about 115 guns. For all these guns, the batteries inflicted little damage on Preble's squadron other than destroying one gunboat with a heated shot.²⁰ However, the Tripolitans attempted to improve their gunner during the winter. They conducted gunnery practice in January 1805, including the use of heated shot. A renegade *Philadelphia* crewman instructed the gunners. The results of gunnery practice at that time were indifferent, but if the Tripolitans continued practicing, the batteries' accuracy could have improved considerably by July. The Tripolitans also added guns to the fortifications on the western and northwestern sides of the town.²¹

Since the Tripolitans were using heated shot, a single hit had potential for inflicting catastrophic damage against any of Rodgers' ships. Although it would be a lucky shot indeed to seriously hurt the sturdy *Constitution*, a red-hot shot would have a good chance of destroying a gunboat, bomb ketch, or sloop. A single hit on a brig, schooner, or even a big frigate could start a fire in the rigging or ignite the ship's

magazine. Even if the ship was not crippled or destroyed it would likely have to retire for repairs.

Although an attack against Tripoli involved some risk, it seems likely that Rodgers could have crushed the Tripolitan gunboats and then bombarded the batteries and the town. If so, his firepower in itself might have compelled Yusef to accept American peace terms. If not, he would have been on station to continue the bombardment in conjunction with Eaton and Hamet's land forces when they arrived.

What if Eaton Continued Toward Tripoli?

On 11 June 1805, the last of Hassan Bey's forces broke and fled to the west upon the appearance of the *U.S.S. Constellation*. What would have happened had the *Constellation* carried orders not to evacuate, but to continue to Tripoli? The march to Tripoli entailed tremendous hazards. Could Eaton have overcome them?

After arranging for support from the navy and establishing a garrison for Derne, Eaton's force could have been ready to march by the end of June. Eaton planned to move overland via Benghazi and along the coast to Tripoli. He does not appear to have given further consideration to moving by sea after he left Alexandria in March. Had Eaton desired to move from Derne to Tripoli by sea, Rodgers could have offered the U.S. frigate *John Adams* and the brig *Franklin*. The *John Adams* had been converted to a troop ship capable of moving six hundred men. It escorted a flotilla of eight gunboats from the United States and arrived at Syracuse on 6 July 1805. Captain James Barron (the commodore's brother) purchased *Franklin* at Trieste in April 1805. It was smaller than the *John Adams*, but still could probably have carried at least two hundred troops.²²

Moving by sea would have offered several advantages. It would have been faster than moving by land, it would have required less logistical and financial support,

and it would have reduced the opportunities for Hamet's allies to change their minds about the expedition. However, Hamet would have had to leave behind three-quarters of his troops. The troops left behind would have been Bedouins of uncertain military value, but quantity has a quality of its own. A larger force, just by its appearance, would have been valuable as Hamet approached Tripoli. With American cash, Hamet might still have found numerous recruits on shore after landing in the well-populated area east of Tripoli. However, the more troops Hamet brought with him, the more easily he would have recruited new followers. Hamet depended on demonstrating such strength that uncommitted tribes would flock to him, while Yusef's followers would desert.

The Libyan coast offered no ports between Bomba and Tripoli capable of supporting a brig or larger vessel.²³ Hamet's troops could either have moved to Bomba or they could have rowed in small boats to the *John Adams* and the *Franklin* as they lay anchored off Derne. When the ships neared Tripoli, the troops would have had to transfer to small boats and come in over the beach. Shallow-draft vessels, such as *Nautilus*, *Hornet*, or the eight new gunboats, might have been able to ferry some of Hamet's horses.

The *John Adams* and the *Franklin* could then have carried Hamet's army to a point close to Tripoli. With favorable winds, the voyage would have taken only four days; the gunboats, if used to ferry horses, might have taken a day or two longer. Bushaifa Bay, near Misurata, offered a good landing site about seven to ten days' march from Tripoli. The silted-up ancient port of Lebda, only four days from Tripoli, might also have offered a suitable landing site. Closer landing sites would have risked a greater chance of opposition and would have lessened Hamet's opportunities to recruit new troops from the relatively well-populated region between Misurata and Tripoli.²⁴

The *John Adams* and the *Franklin* could probably have landed unopposed at Lebda or Bushaifa. Even so, the novelty of an amphibious operation would have severely challenged Hamet's Arab followers. If forces loyal to Yusef caught Hamet's army debarking, the operation could have turned into a disaster. Over half the amphibious operations conducted in the age of sail failed. Those that succeeded, such as the British landing at Abukir Bay in 1801, required careful planning and well-trained soldiers and sailors.²⁵ Under these circumstances, it is not surprising Eaton gave little thought to moving by sea. Instead, he planned to move by land.

The distance from Derne to Tripoli is about 770 miles--roughly one-and-a-half times the distance from Alexandria to Derne. Hassan Bey, going the opposite direction, departed Tripoli in early march and reached Derne on 28 April--a journey of about fifty-five days. If Eaton departed Derne for Tripoli on 1 July--the earliest practical date--he might have arrived outside Tripoli on or about 25 August. No more than a month would have remained before the weather turned unfavorable for naval operations. A number of challenges would have faced the army that might have delayed its arrival at Tripoli--or prevented it from arriving at all. Eaton took fifty-one days to march from the Arab's Tower to Derne. At this rate of march he would have needed seventy-seven days to reach Tripoli and would have arrived on or about 8 September--almost at the close of the season for naval operations.

Eaton had to suppress six mutinies on the march from Alexandria to Derne. At first he quieted the mutinies by disbursing all his cash. Later he needed his disciplined marines and mercenaries and control of the army's rations to suppress rebellions. Even then, he was lucky. When the Arab pistol that was aimed at George Farquhar's breast on 8 April misfired, the army was saved. Eaton wrote in his journal that, had the pistol fired, he could not have prevented a bloody melee that would have destroyed the army.

On the long march to Tripoli, Eaton would probably have encountered further mutinies. The challenges of the march from Derne to Tripoli and the dread of what awaited at the end of the march might have given ample motivation for rebellion. Although American cash might have bought off some of the Arabs, greed would likely have driven sheiks of il Taiib's ilk to charge what the market would bear--and then some. Mutinies always carry potential for catastrophe. An incident such as the one on 8 April could easily have resulted in Christian casualties--including Eaton. Eaton, in fact, would have been a likely target for any serious mutineer. If Eaton were killed or incapacitated, the army would probably have marched no further. Hamet lacked the strength of will to lead the army on a difficult march. O'Bannon might have tried to take Eaton's place, but probably would not have succeeded. O'Bannon lacked Eaton's experience and credibility. To the Arabs, O'Bannon was a formidable warrior, but to the U.S. Navy officers on whom he would depend for support, O'Bannon was just a junior officer.

Eaton's squad of marines had been reduced by half in the assault on Derne; his Greek infantry was reduced by a third. The Arab forces more than tripled in number since reaching Bomba. On the march to Derne, Eaton's Christian soldiers were able to guard the supplies of an army of less than a thousand, but could the reduced force have guarded the supplies of an army of more than four thousand? Possibly, but it would have been risky. The chances of success would have been greatly improved if Rodgers sent Eaton the hundred marines Barron had earlier refused.

Controlling the expanded army would have been a major challenge in the march to Tripoli, but not the only one. The route from Derne to Tripoli is not only longer but is more difficult than from Alexandria to Derne. The army would have been marching in the heat of summer. Water is scarcer and the climate is more extreme, especially along the coast between Benghazi and Misurata. The coastal mountains

TABLE 2
NORTH AFRICAN TEMPERATURE AND RAINFALL AVERAGES
FOR MARCH AND JULY

	Average Daily Low Temperature (° Celsius)		Average High Temperature (° Celsius)		Average No. of Days with Rain	
	March	July	March	July	March	July
Alexandria	13°	23°	21°	29°	3	0
Benghazi	12°	22°	21°	29°	6	< 1
Tripoli	11°	22°	19°	29°	5	< 1

Source: National Geographic Atlas of the World, Revised Sixth Edition

between Derne and Benghazi are not high, but they are cut by steep ravines and were inhabited by hyenas and other wild predators. Beyond Benghazi, the fertile coastal strip disappears, and along the southern shoreline of the Gulf of Sirte, only a barren strip of sand lay between the sea and the trackless Sahara. Closer to Misurata, stretches of quicksand might trap an unwary traveler. Although plentiful food supplies were available around Derne, the countryside between Derne and Benghazi was less well stocked. Between Benghazi and Misurata the army would have had to subsist on what it carried or what the navy might deliver.

Eaton could not have left Derne earlier than the beginning of July because he first would have needed Commodore Rodgers' assurance of support. Eaton's army would have numbered about two thousand fighters when it left Derne, plus perhaps that many more camel drivers, footmen, and family members. On his way from Tripoli to Derne, Hassan Bey had recruited 675 cavalry and up to 1250 infantry. If Hamet were as successful, the army would number nearly four thousand fighters and perhaps two or three thousand other persons by the time it reached Tripoli.²⁶ The increased size of the army would have exacerbated the supply problem. Fortunately, a large percentage of

the new recruits would join the army only after it reached Misurata, where supplies were more plentiful.²⁷

The next large town west of Derne was Benghazi. Hassan Bey would likely have reached the town far enough ahead of Eaton to organize a defense. Hassan still commanded about 250 men when he withdrew from Derne and could probably have recruited enough men at Benghazi to at least double his force. Benghazi's fortifications were stronger than those of Derne. The harbor battery carried larger guns--eight 18-pounders instead of eight 9-pounders--and a castle standing above the town could have resisted infantry or cavalry assault.²⁸

Eaton and Hamet would have been reluctant to simply bypass Benghazi, for to do so would have undermined Hamet's credibility, deprived him of supplies and possible reinforcements, and left an enemy in his rear. To capture Benghazi, Eaton would have had to storm the castle with scaling ladders or batter it with artillery. Scaling ladders might have proved quicker, but the marines and Greeks would have received no help from the Arabs in their assault. Nor could Eaton have afforded the casualties his Christians would have been likely to suffer.

If Eaton chose to batter the castle walls with artillery, he could have brought his field pieces or one or more naval guns ashore. The ships could also have supported with naval fires as at Derne. Neither the castle nor the harbor fortifications were strongly constructed. *Argus's* long 12-pounders could probably have reduced the fortifications in a few hours. Because of accumulated silt, the harbor could not have admitted anything larger than a sloop or a gunboat.²⁹ *Argus* could not have come near enough to use her carronades against the fortifications. A bomb ketch would have been ideal for attacking the town, but Rodgers probably would not have released one for the purpose. Any ship near enough to fire on the town would have been in reach of the harbor battery, and although experience did not cause the navy to dread Tripolitan

gunners, the 18-pounders had potential to inflict great damage, especially on small vessels.

Even without naval support, it seems likely that Eaton and Hamet could have captured Benghazi. However, if Hassan succeeded in delaying the capture of the town or delayed Eaton and Hamet from continuing toward Tripoli, he would have greatly damaged the expedition's chances of success. Given the narrowing window of opportunity for joint operations with the navy, Eaton and Hamet could not have afforded more than a few days' delay. If they were still in Benghazi in late July, they would probably have had to stay there and hope to resume operations the following spring. Hamet and the sheiks might have felt relieved by such a development. One can easily imagine Hamet urging Eaton to remain in Benghazi. Hamet and the sheiks would have known how inhospitable the desert before them was in the height of the summer.

Eaton, of course, would have *doggedly insisted on pressing onward*. However, if the Arabs refused to march, Eaton could not have compelled them. In Benghazi, the Arabs could have found plenty of supplies other than what Eaton controlled. Eaton could only have offered cash to entice the Arabs to march onward. If he didn't have enough cash, the army would have stayed in Benghazi.

If Eaton succeeded in persuading the army to continue from Benghazi, it would have marched 170 miles south to the vicinity of present-day El Agheila. Here the army could have found good water supplies, and the navy could have landed boats with additional provisions. The next reliable water supply was at the village of Zaffran (near present-day Sirte), 170 miles to the west. Zaffran was also the next place the navy could have safely sent boats ashore. In prosperous years Zaffran could supply meat and vegetables, but 1805 was not a prosperous year; Eaton might have needed provisions from the navy.³⁰

From Zaffran to Bushaifa Bay is about 130 miles across a strip of sand between the Gulf of Sirte and an extensive inland salt marsh. A few sources of brackish water might have been found. An alternative route follows the modern highway inland of the salt marsh. Bushaifa Bay offered a roadstead and beach suitable for landing supplies, if wanted. The army would then have been entering a relatively prosperous cultivated area, but because of the American blockade and the bad harvest in 1804, provisions were less plentiful than usual.

From Bushaifa Bay to Tripoli is about 140 miles--as little as seven days' marching. Probably the army would have moved more slowly, partly to recruit reinforcements, partly from fear of the coming battle for Tripoli. Hamet had shown trepidation on the approach to Derne, and Tripoli promised to be a tougher fight. Hamet could not stand back and let Eaton's Christians bear the brunt of the fighting, as he had at Derne. The Arab forces would have to take part in the assault against the town. If Hamet's forces lost, it would be a long, long retreat to Derne.

The march from Derne would have been extraordinarily difficult, but if all went well, Eaton and Hamet could have approached the walls of Tripoli in late August 1805 at the head of four thousand fighting men.

What force did Yusef have to oppose Eaton and Hamet? In 1802 he established a standing force of fifteen hundred Turkish mercenaries and twelve thousand Arab horsemen. In addition, some of the European consuls estimated he had made provisions for an irregular force of up to fifty thousand men. What part of this force remained in 1805 is uncertain. Commodore Preble reported that Tripoli had twenty-five thousand defenders in August 1804, but he probably overestimated the number.³¹

Captain William Bainbridge and Dr. Jonathan Cowdery of the *Philadelphia* had considerable freedom to roam the Bashaw's castle and the city of Tripoli while held

as prisoners there. They observed and recorded Yusef's preparations to defend the city. Bainbridge passed his observations to Lear and Barron by writing in invisible ink. Their letters and journals indicate Yusef had difficulty finding men to defend the city. Cowdery observed that Yusef's son had gone to the Misurata area in March 1805 to recruit soldiers and had returned with none. Cowdery also recorded in March that Yusef planned a muster of ten thousand soldiers on a beach outside the city, but no one showed up.³²

Yusef's difficulties were the result of disaffection among the people and a shortage of money. The American blockade was porous, but nevertheless had succeeded in causing shortages of grain and other provisions in Tripoli and the surrounding region. A poor harvest in 1804 made the shortages worse. At the same time, the American blockade reduced Yusef's income from piracy and trade. Yusef attempted to make up cash shortages by extorting jewels and other valuables from the people, which did not dispose them to defend him.³³

This was exactly the situation Eaton described to Barron in his 1 May 1805 letter from Derne. Because Yusef was without cash and the people were disgruntled against him, he could not raise armies to oppose Hamet. Eaton expected that the people of Tripoli, encouraged by a modest amount of American cash, would either rise against Yusef or at least stay neutral.³⁴ Eaton did not expect to fight 25,000 men when he reached Tripoli at the head of Hamet's army. He may even have imagined that Yusef would flee the city when, after a harrowing six weeks' naval bombardment, Hamet's army appeared outside the city.

Yusef, however, probably did not plan to flee. Through the winter and spring he worked conscientiously to improving the town's defenses. He chose to keep his family in his castle rather than send them to the countryside where they might fall into the hands of Hamet's men. (Yusef appears to have caught on early to the

historical principle that if one must be captured, it is best to be captured by the Americans.) Yusef also took additional hostages from among the families of his military chiefs to ensure their loyalty.³⁵

If Yusef managed to muster a force of fifteen hundred men and if he kept his nerve, he would probably have had little to fear from Hamet's army. Tripoli in 1805 was surrounded by high stone walls--real fortifications, not makeshift breastworks as at Derne. With the forces at his disposal, Eaton's best option would have been to use artillery to batter down the city gates. His forces would then have had to storm the gates in a tough, hand-to-hand fight. The marines and Greek mercenaries would probably have led the attack; Hamet's Arabs had shown no inclination for bloody, close-in combat. Such close-in fighting would quickly have nullified the marines' and Greeks' advantages of discipline and firepower.

The navy could have offered little assistance to the land force, for Tripoli's landward approaches were not visible from the sea. *The squadron could not safely enter Tripoli harbor.* Only shallow drafted gunboats, bomb ketches, and sloops could safely enter the harbor--and any of these might have a tough time against the Tripolitan gunboats and harbor batteries. To bring his frigates into the harbor, Rodgers would have to neutralize the gunboats and shore batteries; even then entering the harbor would have been risky. Once in the harbor, Rodgers could fire on Yusef's palace. The main gate to the city would have remained out of view even from the harbor.

Yusef had demonstrated throughout his life that he was strong-willed and ruthless. He was not a weak character like Hamet. He was not one to lose his nerve. While he appears not to have commanded anything close to twenty-five thousand men in the summer of 1805, he probably had more than enough to repel Hamet and Eaton at the walls of Tripoli. As Hamet's Arabs would be likely to desert after a major defeat,

Eaton and his Christian soldiers, if still alive, might have found themselves stranded on a hostile shore.

If Eaton had been allowed to continue his march from Derne, he would most likely have reached Benghazi and gone no further. Possibly he would have pressed on, arriving only after fall weather had forced the U.S. Navy back to the open sea. Perhaps he would have reached Tripoli only to be defeated outside the city walls. One cannot rule out the possibility he would have reached Tripoli and stormed its walls in a military exploit that would ring through the ages--William Eaton was a formidable character, and ordinary calculations of success might not have applied to him.

Did Lear Make the Best Choice?

When Yusef Caramanli offered to release Philadelphia's crew for \$60,000 and to make a peace agreement that called for no further tributes, Lear accepted. As even Eaton conceded, the peace terms with Tripoli were favorable and, "separately considered, more honorable than any peace obtained by any Christian nation...within a hundred years." Lear recognized that he was getting a good deal. His correspondence does not indicate he ever considered rejecting the terms. The treaty's secret clause allowing Yusef to delay releasing Hamet's family was distasteful, but Yusef would not agree to the treaty unless the clause was included.

What if Lear had rejected the terms? Perhaps Yusef would have offered even better terms--lower ransom, or no ransom at all. Perhaps Yusef would have broken the negotiations and continued the war. If the war continued, Rodgers was ready to sail into Tripoli Harbor with a large squadron. Eaton was in Derne and could continue toward Tripoli. The American and allied forces had the potential to topple Yusef or to force him to offer extremely generous terms--or everything could have gone wrong. Though derided by Eaton as "a colonel--who never set a squadron in the

field, nor the division of a battle knows more than a spinster," Lear was enough of a military man to recognize the long odds against Eaton accomplishing anything useful during the summer of 1805. Personal animosity against Eaton did not improve Lear's estimation of what Eaton might accomplish.

As for Rodgers' squadron, Lear understood that, as Clausewitz would later write, "war is the realm of chance." As we have seen, a naval attack on Tripoli entailed serious risks. The most dangerous possibility was for Rodgers to lose ships in his attack on Tripoli. Any one of Rodgers' frigates was worth four or five times the \$60,000 Yusef now demanded, and if the crews fell into the hands of the Tripolitans, ransoming them would have cost yet more money. Furthermore, the loss of another major American warship would have gravely damaged American prestige in the Mediterranean and President Jefferson's popularity at home.³⁶

In addition to the risk of losing men and ships, Rodgers' squadron could simply fail to compel Yusef to submit. *Philadelphia's* Captain William Bainbridge wrote to Commodore Barron that the navy by itself could never compel Yusef to release his prisoners.³⁷ Yusef had withstood Preble's attacks; he might withstand Rodgers' as well. Eventually the weather would drive Rodgers away. Once the navy left, it might not be able to return. Lear had heard Barron's opinion that the squadron was unfit for service. Rodgers said the squadron was ready to attack Tripoli in the summer, but when fall came, several ships would have to return to the United States for overhauls. President Jefferson had already stated in March 1805 that he would withdraw the squadron if peace were not achieved by fall.³⁸

Lear also must have considered one of his bargaining chips to be of uncertain reliability. Lear acknowledged that the capture of Derne was a key factor in pushing Yusef to negotiate. However, at the beginning of June 1805, Lear had no way of knowing whether Hamet and Eaton had succeeded in keeping the town. Any day

could have brought news that Yusef's forces had recaptured the town. Such news would have done as much to encourage Yusef to keep fighting as the earlier fall of Derne had encouraged him to negotiate. Lear had little confidence in Eaton or Hamet, and he may have considered that the sooner he signed a peace treaty, the better.³⁹

The continued hostility of the French and Spanish presented another consideration for Lear. Lear knew that the Spanish and probably the French consuls in Tripoli were encouraging Yusef to continue the war. American ambitions toward Florida and differences in the interpretation of the boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase had raised tensions between the U.S. and Spain to the point that Jefferson was considering war.⁴⁰

France was allied with Spain, and French hostility to American operations was thinly veiled. As noted earlier, French agents regularly counseled Barbary and Turkish leaders to act against American interests. Because of French pressure, the King of the Two Sicilies refused to loan gunboats to the Americans for the 1805 campaign, as he had the previous year.⁴¹

War with France and Spain was a real threat, although Lear's correspondence does not indicate concern. If war began, the American squadron would have been forced to leave the Mediterranean and return to protect American shipping in the Atlantic and the Caribbean--still the areas where most American shipping sailed. In April a large French fleet had left Toulon and sailed into the Atlantic. The Spanish were assembling a powerful fleet at Cadiz. These fleets, it turned out, were meant for England, not America, and Lord Nelson would defeat them at Trafalgar in October 1805. In June 1805, however, the French and Spanish fleets represented a formidable potential threat.

Another consideration was the possibility of war with one or more of the other Barbary powers. Tunis was already threatening war. If it appeared that a

Christian army was about to capture Tripoli, Yusef's Muslim brothers in Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco might find a common cause.⁴²

Lear was also genuinely concerned about the welfare of the crew of the *Philadelphia*. If the war became a matter of survival for Yusef, he might well murder his hostages as a last resort. He had demonstrated his capacity for ruthlessness by murdering his brother Ali in 1795. In January 1805 Danish consul to Tripoli Nicholas Nissen advised U.S. Consul to Tunis that if the Americans used Hamet against Yusef and were successful, the prisoners would be sacrificed.⁴³

Lear thus had many possible calamities to consider: failure to end the war, loss of ships, expansion of the war, murder of the Americans held captive. Against these potential disasters, what potential gain did continued war offer? The United States might save \$60,000, less the expenses of the final campaign. The United States might save even more if Hamet Caramanli regained the Tripolitan throne and reimbursed American expenses in putting him there.

Lear, however, put little faith in weak, vacillating Hamet. He believed the United States would be better off if Yusef stayed in power.⁴⁴ Lear believed Hamet would not be a strong ruler, nor a stable one. Hamet had been Bashaw of Tripoli in 1795 and lasted only four months, losing his place due to his administrative incompetence as much as to Yusef's scheming. How long he would have lasted once reinstalled by the Americans is uncertain. The Americans might have found they could keep Hamet in power only by surrounding him with a force of Christian soldiers. However, Tripoli's Muslim inhabitants would probably not have stood for a permanent Christian occupation force, nor was America yet interested in becoming a colonial power.⁴⁵ Instead, Hamet would likely have soon fallen, to be replaced by someone whose most probable characteristic would have been hostility toward the United States. Hamet's successor would not have been bound by any agreements Hamet made. Very

likely the United States would have faced new threats of piracy, new demands for tribute, and another expensive war in the Mediterranean.

Considering the potential risks and gains of continuing the war, Lear chose conservatively. His choice lacked the glory and glamour of what Eaton and the U.S. Senate said the U.S. could have achieved, but it also prevented the loss and humiliation that might have resulted from continued war.

Lear accomplished what President Jefferson sent him to do: negotiate a peace settlement that protected American commerce at the least expense to the American treasury. As Jefferson stated in his November 1805 message to Congress, it was never the intention of the United States to overthrow Yusef or to place Hamet on the throne. If the option of doing so existed in June 1805, it would have required "mission creep"--a term used in our time to describe military operations that develop objectives beyond what was originally intended for them. Lear kept U.S. military operations from straying too far from political objectives. He was entirely correct in doing so.

Lear remained at his post as U.S. Consul General to Algiers, but his reputation at home was ruined. He returned to the United States in 1809 but never quieted the criticism of his actions. In 1816 he committed suicide--he could not silence his critics, but at least he didn't have to listen to them any more.⁴⁶

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 of this study presented four questions to be answered. The five chapters that followed attempted to put the questions in context and to suggest answers. Now we can review the questions and consider how well they have been answered.

The first question was: What was the United States trying to achieve by embarking on William Eaton's 1804-1805 campaign? Chapters 2 and 3 of this study described how the United States came into conflict with Tripoli. Years of paying tribute to the Barbary powers merely led to further seizures of American ships and demands for more tribute. Finally, the President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, sent the fledgling U.S. Navy to the Mediterranean. His object was to protect American commerce with the least possible drain on the national treasury. Of course, saving money was not Jefferson's only motive. He considered it an affront to national honor to pay tribute to the Barbary pirates, whom he imagined could easily be cowed by a show of naval force. However, after four years of war and the loss of the *Philadelphia*, an inexpensive peace still eluded the United States. Jefferson saw Eaton's low-budget campaign as a means to bring a favorable peace at the least possible expense. Jefferson emphatically stated that the purpose of Eaton's campaign was not to place Hamet Caramanli on the throne of Tripoli. Hamet was a means to an end--and the end was to save money while protecting commerce.

The second question was: How did Eaton manage to march across the desert and capture Derne? The answer appears to be--more than anything else--by force of will. Of course, several other key factors contributed. One of the most important was naval support. Eaton's army would not have reached Derne without promises of U.S. Navy supplies at Bomba, and Eaton would not have left Bomba alive had Isaac Hull's ships failed to appear. During the assault on and subsequent defense of Derne, naval gunfire played a critical role in the success of Eaton's forces.

Another key element in Eaton's success was Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon and his squad of marines. These professional soldiers were the backbone of the Eaton's army. Without them, Eaton could not have coerced his Arab allies to march to Derne, and the example of the marines probably inspired Eaton's Greek mercenaries to join in the charge that overran Derne's defenses. O'Bannon, in particular, distinguished himself as *Eaton's most reliable and capable subordinate*. The Marine Corps Hymn still commemorates the march of O'Bannon and his squad "to the shores of Tripoli."

The third question was: How did land and naval forces work together to achieve success in the operation? As mentioned in Chapter 6, land-sea operations had a high rate of failure in the age of sail. The attack on Derne succeeded largely because it overcame some of the key difficulties of joint operations. One of the greatest problems, historically, was coordination of land and sea forces. During the Derne campaign, Eaton had the good fortune to be supported by Isaac Hull, one of the most professional and capable officers in the early years of the U.S. Navy.

Commodore Barron instructed Hull that Eaton was commander of the land forces and Hull was to support him. A more egotistical and less conscientious

officer than Hull--one might say, an officer more typical of the times--could have objected to taking orders from a blowhard civilian with no official military rank. Hull did not object, but instead displayed energy and initiative in supporting Eaton.

Hull, unlike many other officers in the navy, got along well with Eaton and believed Eaton's expedition was worthwhile. He and Eaton coordinated closely on the way to Egypt and at Alexandria. Hull ensured his subordinates knew the recognition signals he had arranged with Eaton. Hull also ensured his ships were on station and ready to support the land forces during the attack on Derne. One can find a sharp contrast to earlier American joint operations, such as the expedition to Penobscot Bay in 1778, in which the naval commander refused to provide fire support to the land force after it was ashore.

In the attack on Derne, the land and naval forces benefitted from the small size of the town and the weakness of its defenses. Captain Evans was able to station the *Hornet* only one hundred yards from the enemy's shore battery. *Argus* and *Nautilus* were farther from the town, but still close enough to see the progress of the land forces and adjust their fires accordingly. It appears almost certain that Eaton's expedition could not have achieved much success without naval support.

Eaton's expedition was not just a joint operation of American land and naval forces--it was combined with forces of a different nation. Hamet Caramanli's Arab forces gave the expedition its legitimacy and provided combat power that was essential to the defense of Derne. Eaton's relations with the Arabs featured all of the conflicts and complexities inherent in combined operations. Eaton's lack of appreciation for Arab ways of thinking showed in his generally contemptuous opinions of Arabs and Turks. Despite his lack of understanding, Eaton succeeded in bullying his allies into marching from Alexandria to Derne, and he likely could have bullied them into marching to Benghazi. Thereafter, however,

his approach would likely have failed. As argued in Chapter 6, Eaton probably could not have persuaded his allies to march beyond Benghazi, at least not in the summer of 1805.

One aspect of combined operations that always exists is divergence of goals among allies. As Carl von Clausewitz wrote in *On War*, "One country may support another's cause, but will never take it so seriously as it takes its own."¹ America's goals were sufficiently served when Yusef agreed to a favorable peace. Hamet's goals were not.

This brings us to the final question: Should Eaton have been allowed to press on toward Tripoli? The analysis in Chapter 6 indicates that the answer is no. Eaton and Hamet achieved Jefferson's intent by capturing Derne and encouraging Yusef Caramanli to negotiate a favorable peace. Had they gone further, they probably would not have accomplished much to increase the pressure on Yusef--at least not in 1805. If they accomplished anything, it would be more likely to push Yusef into a war of survival, with a negotiated peace--and safe release of the *Philadelphia* crew--becoming less likely. Another possible outcome--the defeat of Eaton and Hamet's army--would have removed the threat they posed and encouraged Yusef to raise the price of peace.

In terms of what President Jefferson wanted to achieve in the Tripolitan War--to protect American commerce at the least possible expense--Tobias Lear chose correctly in accepting Yusef's offer of peace. Unfortunately, the disagreeable secret clause concerning Hamet's family undermined Jefferson's other objective in going to war--to defend national honor. Jefferson went to war against Tripoli partly to demonstrate that America would not accept the corrupt ways of the rest of the world. How could America reconcile its self image with a peace treaty that stank of the secret diplomacy of the European monarchies?

America absolved itself by blaming Lear. The Senate's findings that Eaton could have taken Tripoli but for Lear's dishonorable machinations reflected not reality so much as what America wanted to think of itself. The way America wanted to remember the Tripolitan War emphasized the exploits of Preble, Decatur, and Eaton. Morris was disgraced, Barron forgotten, and Lear disowned.

APPENDIX

MAPS

The following maps of the Mediterranean are reproduced from: U.S. Department of the Navy, *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Pirates*, 7 volumes., Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935-1944.

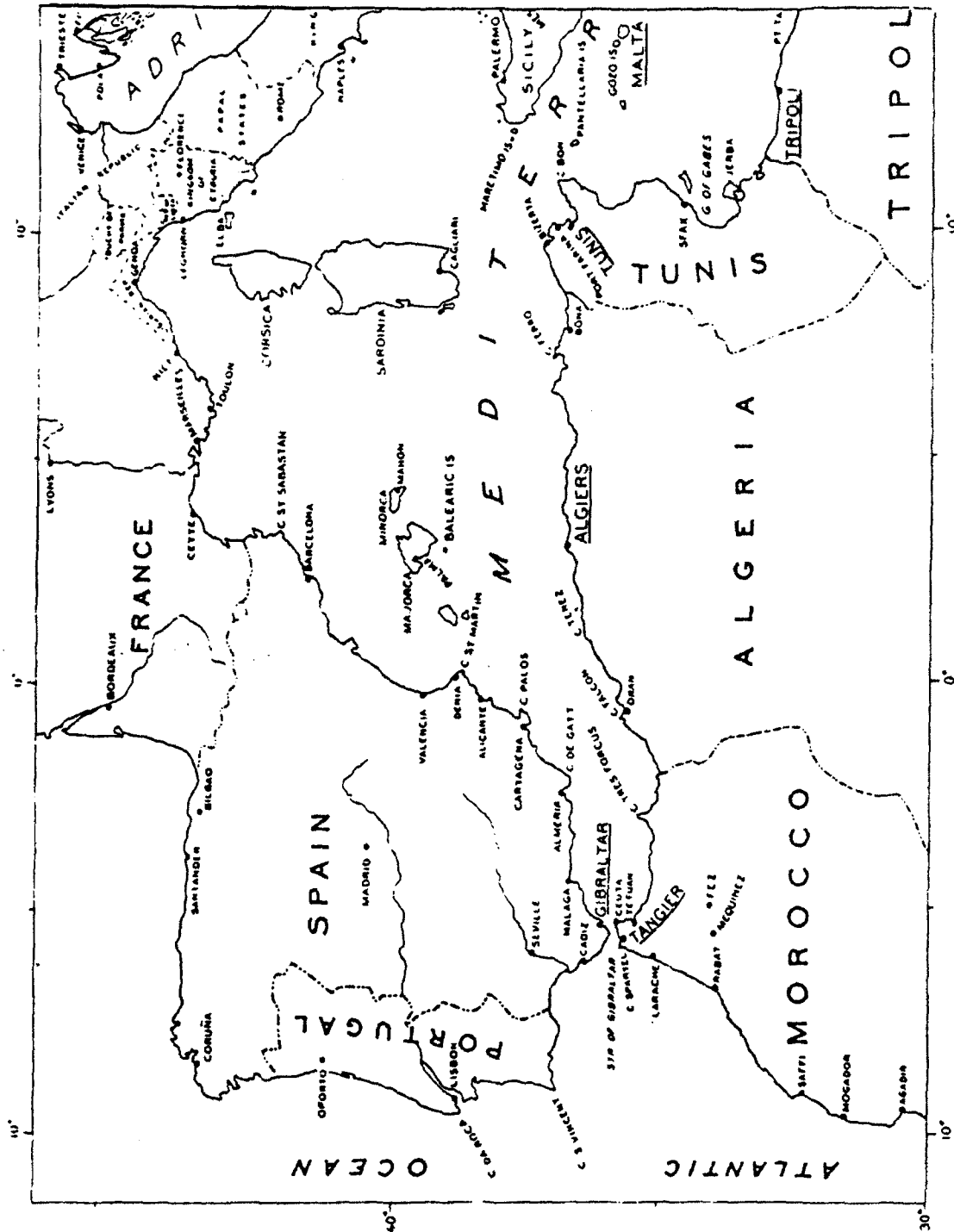


Figure 4.--The Western Mediterranean in 1805

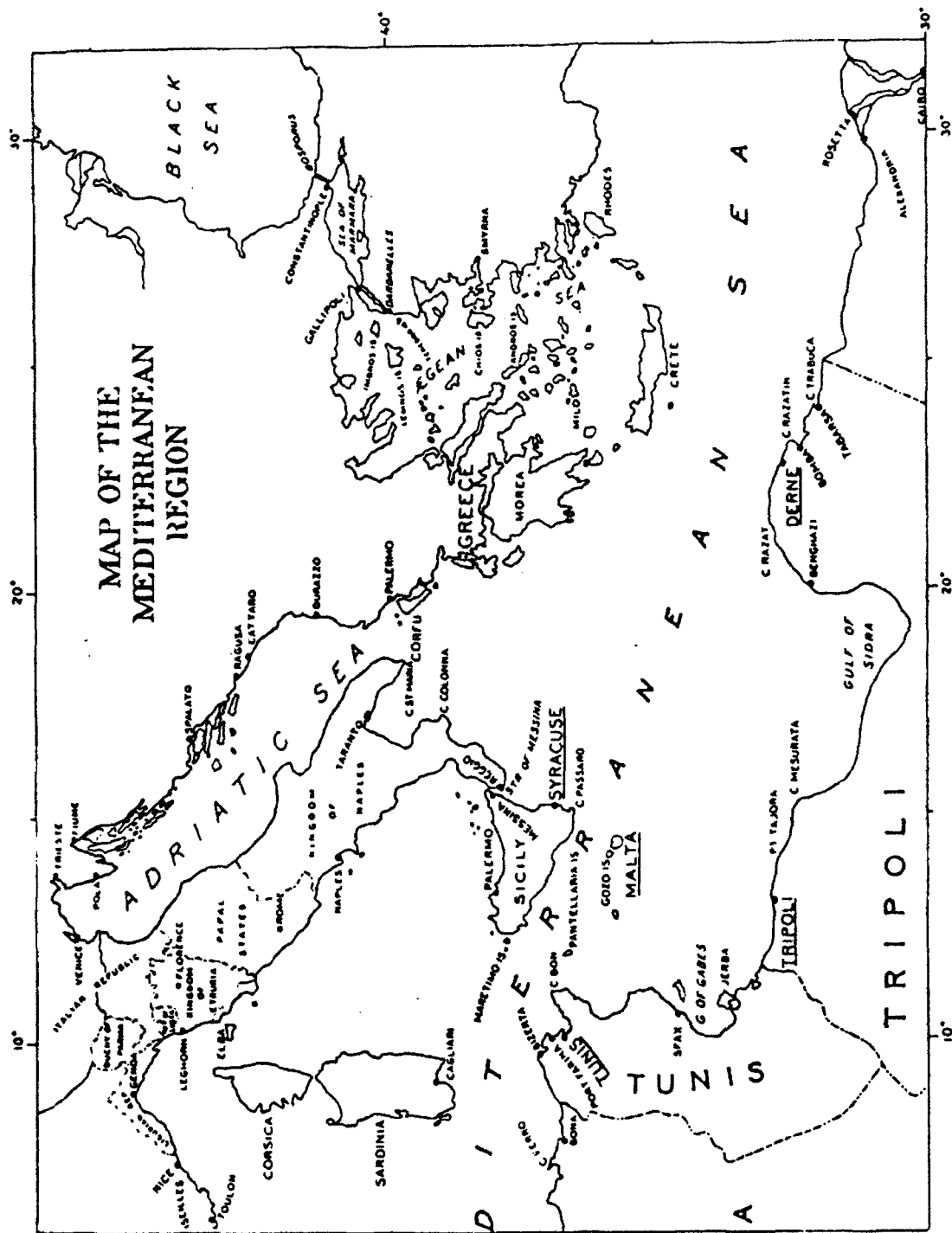


Figure 5.--The Eastern Mediterranean in 1805

ENDNOTES

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² Glenn Tucker, *Dawn Like Thunder* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1963), 283.

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⁵ Francis Rennell Rodd, *General Wm. Eaton: The Failure of an Idea* (New York: Minton, Balch, 1932). The assertion that Eaton could have reached Derne is his central theme. Kitzen, Whipple, Prentiss, and Tucker agree.

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⁸ Kitzen, 14.

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²¹ Kitzen, 64.

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- ⁴⁷ *Naval Documents*, 5:303, 320.
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⁶ *Naval Documents*, 6:122.

⁷ *Naval Documents*, 6:344.

⁸ *Naval Documents*, 6:377, Kitzen, 173.

⁹ *Naval Documents*, 6:373.

¹⁰ *Naval Documents*, 6:392.

¹¹ Kitzen, 175.

¹² *Naval Documents* 6:496

¹³ *Naval Documents* 6:577; Kitzen, 176.

¹⁴ Gunboat No. 1 was found to be unfit to cross the Atlantic, and Gunboat No. 7 lost a mast and had to return to New York. It sailed again on 20 June and was never heard from again. (*Naval Documents* 5:533, 6:40)

¹⁵ *Naval Documents* 6:259.

¹⁶ *Naval Documents* 6:30-31, 6:35-43, 6:259, 6:133-135.

¹⁷ *Naval Documents* 6:16-17.

¹⁸ *Naval Documents* 5:488.

¹⁹ *Naval Documents* 5:427, 4:523.

²⁰ *Naval Documents* 4:502.

²¹ *Naval Documents*, 5:300, 4:523

²² *Naval Documents* 5:418, 6:106, 5:532

²³ F. W. Beechey and H. W. Beechey, *Proceedings of the Expedition to Explore the Northern Coast of Africa, from Tripoli Eastward, etc.* (London, 1828), Appendix: vi.

²⁴ Beechey and Beechey, Appendix: vi-vii.

²⁵ Thomas More Molyneux, Esq., *A Succinct History of Conjunct Operations: Or Expeditions that have been carried on jointly by the Fleet and Army;*

With a Comment on Littoral War (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1759), 7; Brendan P. Ryan "Amphibious Assault, 1801 Style," *Marine Corps Gazette* (July 1979), reprinted in *Assault from the Sea: Essays on the History of Amphibious Warfare*, Merrill L. Bartlett, ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1983), 69-73.

²⁶ *Naval Documents* 5:107.

²⁷ Nevill Barbour, ed. *A Survey of North West Africa (The Mahgrib)*, Second Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) 341-342; Beechey, Appendix:vi-xvii.

²⁸ *Naval Documents* 6:117; Beechey, Appendix:xii.

²⁹ Beechey, Appendix:xii.

³⁰ Beechey, Appendix:vii-ix.

³¹ Folayan, 269; *Naval Documents*, 4:294

³² *Naval Documents*, 5:443.

³³ *Naval Documents*, 5:100, 5:435 5:443.

³⁴ *Naval Documents*, 5:551.

³⁵ *Naval Documents*, 5:505, 5:435.

³⁶ *Naval Documents* 6:31.

³⁷ *Naval Documents* 5:505.

³⁸ *Naval Documents* 5:465.

³⁹ *Naval Documents* 6:92.

⁴⁰ Paul A. Varg, *Foreign Policies of the Founding Fathers*. (Michigan State University Press, 1963. Reprint, Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, Inc., 1970), 105.

⁴¹ *Naval Documents* 5:277.

⁴² *Naval Documents* 6:16-17; Kola Folayan, "Tripoli and the War with the U.S.A., 1801-5," *Journal of African History*, XIII, 2 (1972) 261-270.

⁴³ *Naval Documents*, 5:312.

⁴⁴ *Naval Documents* 5:116.

⁴⁵ *Naval Documents* 5:137.

⁴⁶ Kitzen, 179.

Chapter 7

¹Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 603.

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